



# ASCIP *RISK ALERT!*

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**Date:** February 16, 2007

**Attention:** ASCIP Members

**Subject:** Theft of Copper Wire and Building Materials

Recent claims have made ASCIP aware of an increasing number of thefts of heavy gage copper electrical wire, water pipe, roof drains and scuppers, and HVAC coils from member school sites. Copper thefts are an ongoing problem; however recent record prices paid for scrap copper may be driving an increase in such thefts nationwide.

These losses appear to occur at night and on weekends and may involve live electrical circuits, active water lines, and operational HVAC units. The thefts have also resulted in additional damage to school roofs and to other rooftop equipment.

ASCIP's initial investigations lead staff to believe that such thefts may be regional and involve both ASCIP and non-ASCIP member school sites. It is believed that certain well prepared individuals with a good knowledge of electrical and HVAC systems gain access to the roofs of school buildings and turn off or otherwise disconnect power to heavy electrical cables which are then pulled from the rooftop conduits and hauled away by vehicle. Copper water pipes have been broken off or torn out by force leaving the running water to flood the affected school facilities.

Over a decade ago the high price of scrap copper caused a number of school sites to be stripped of their rooftop HVAC units which were disassembled and the copper parts sold for scrap value. Copper electrical wires in remote desert areas also disappeared. Today, such losses appear to involve anything made of copper that can be reached from outside an unguarded building.

Although law enforcement has been made aware of these incidents, ASCIP members should be watchful for unauthorized persons or vehicles on campus during non-school hours. Because it is not uncommon for legitimate contractors to be working on weekends, the sighting of a contractor vehicle under such circumstances may not trigger an immediate concern.

ASCIP recommends an increased level of awareness at all school facilities. School site roads and gateways should be closed and locked after hours if possible to prevent unauthorized vehicle access. If vehicles are noted on campus during odd hours or on weekends, jotting down a license number and a description of that vehicle may be valuable. If you see anything suspicious **DO NOT APPROACH ANYONE THAT YOU BELIEVE MAY BE STEALING COPPER**. Observe from a distance, call 911, and report that the activity is going on now!