

Why do we need NEWPRS (Northeastern Wisconsin Reporting System)?

Throughout the industrialized world, stealing valuable metal has increased. It is a serious concern to law enforcement, businesses, public utilities, railroad companies, and the community.

During the past 10 years the value of scrap metals has increased. Since the year 2000, the value of copper has increased 400%. In 2002 copper was at 65 cents a pound. By mid 2006 copper was at \$4.00 a pound. During this time period the incidents of metal theft has also increased. Since 2003 the four basic nonferrous or base metals, aluminum, copper, nickel, and zinc have been in high demand.

A small percentage of scrap metal theft cases involve large amounts of metals. Most thefts involve small amounts taken, often from repeat victims. Utility companies are the most susceptible for repeat targeting and when victimized pose a critical threat to the city's infrastructure. Also the cost to repair these utilities affects everyone.

The high demand for metal, the increased opportunities for offenders to steal metals, and weak regulation of the metal resale market have coincided to increase the scrap metal theft problem.

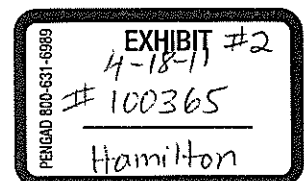
Foreclosed properties and new construction sites have been targets of metal thefts. Thieves have targeted these homes/properties for their copper pipes, copper wiring, and air conditioning systems.

The only avenue for thieves to convert these metals into cash is by selling the metal to the scrap dealer (Buyer). Scrap metal buyers provide the necessary link for creating profit from scrap metal theft. Thefts are driven by the ability to sell stolen goods to the recycler.

Thieves are stealing from vacant and foreclosed properties. They have targeted playgrounds, cemeteries (bronze vases), and even scrap metal dealers. They are stealing plumbing fixtures, wiring/cables, air conditioning units, beer kegs, aluminum siding/gutters/roofs, sewer covers and grates, vehicle parts, especially catalytic converters that can be worth anywhere from \$50 to \$200.

There are **19 licensed junk dealers located in the city of Milwaukee**. They are accepting these high valued metals on a daily basis. They all pay out cash to the sellers of these metals. Sometimes they accept metals that they should reasonably suspect the seller does not lawfully own.

To respond to this problem additional legislative action is required. Better sales reporting can assist in identifying and punishing thieves. It can also provide a deterrent for thieves using scrap dealers to move stolen metals. We need to make it more difficult for the thief to transfer stolen property at the scrap dealer for cash. The scrap dealer also



needs to be held more accountable for reporting the sale of stolen property. Dealers need to be required to report relevant information related to their purchases.

The current ordinance requires Junk Dealers to report specific items listed as **Regulated Property**. These items were selected because thieves target them and sell them to the junk dealers. These transactions need to be reported to police as soon as possible and Newprs reporting allows this to occur. Newprs will be an efficient and effective way to monitor and regulate junk dealers.

These items need to be entered into Newprs as they are described in the ordinance. Scrap dealers would like to use their *industry standards* for reporting, but these industry descriptions do not clearly identify the item sold. They describe the type/kind of metal only (i.e. stainless steel, brass, aluminum, copper), but do not identify the item (i.e. stainless steel double sink, brass cemetery vase, aluminum windows/doors, or copper pipe).

The theft of metals is occurring in Milwaukee and in the surrounding communities. Utilities, vacant properties, cemeteries, and construction sites have been targets in the past year. These thefts affect the cost of doing business for many companies targeted by thieves. These costs are then passed on to the consumer. Thefts are increasing as the value of these metals rises. We need to deter the thieves from stealing metals and quickly converting the stolen metal into cash at the scrap dealer. Electronic reporting (via Newprs) will allow law enforcement to monitor these sales in a more timely manner and track sellers who are selling stolen metal. This information will be used to identify thieves and prosecute them.