

PUBLIC WORKS

MOTION

The Governor recently signed into law SB 691 (Calderon), which requires scrap metal dealers and recyclers to implement additional recordkeeping requirements and new payment restrictions when purchasing scrap metal. The law will take effect on January 1. The Council had supported this measure (CF#08-0002-S41) as a way to discourage theft.

The Council previously had also asked our Bureau of Street Lighting (BSL) to report on a rash of thefts of underground copper wire from City light poles boxes (CF#07-3871). The problem has been particularly acute in East and South Los Angeles. Many locations that have been repaired by BSL staff have been repeatedly targeted by thieves.

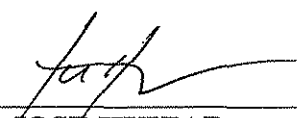
We currently have only two crews made up of two or three staff each, one for single light repair, one for major repairs, dedicated to wire theft incidents citywide. With over 220,000 street lights, BSL is finding it difficult to keep up with the work. To date, they have sealed or hardened approximately 1,000 locations to help prevent future wire thefts.


At a recent news conference in Boyle Heights, BSL staff stated that there have been 171 incidents in CD14 alone this year, which has led to more than 1,000 street lights to go out, affecting thousands of area residents. That day staff managed to repair four locations but there were eleven new wire thefts locations reported in the same area the next day.

Edison sometimes uses cheaper aluminum wire at locations that are hard to secure. This discourages vandals as this metal is less valuable than copper. The City should consider this idea in addition to our current policy of placing security devices around light fixtures that are hard to secure, particularly along the Los Angeles River and in industrial areas.

We also need to do more to enlist the public's help in identifying those individuals who are responsible for these thefts. Taxpayers are losing around \$1 million a year as a result of these crimes, which threaten public safety by plunging neighborhoods into the dark. We need to do more to enlist their help in stopping this growing and unacceptable trend.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Street Lighting be requested to report to Council with a strategy to engage the public in how they can help the City catch vandals who are stealing underground copper wires from City light poles boxes as well as the feasibility of using aluminum wires in industrial and other areas prone to theft.

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