

West Midlands Hit by Rise in EV Charger Cable Theft

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Thieves across the United Kingdom are increasingly targeting public electric vehicle (EV) chargers for their copper cables, prompting suppliers to introduce new security measures.

According to suppliers in the West Midlands, cable theft has become a “significant issue,” leaving many charging stations out of service and EV drivers stranded. While the problem

has also been reported in the United States, British charging operators say the trend is becoming a growing challenge in several regions.

The method is straightforward: offenders locate a public EV charger, cut the cable, and sell it to scrap metal dealers for its copper content. Depending on quality, copper can fetch between £5.60 and £10.20 per cable's worth, based on recent Australian dollar equivalents reported internationally.

However, industry experts point out that the financial reward is minimal compared with the effort and risk involved. Travis Allan, Chief Legal and Public Affairs Officer at Flo EV Charging, told Automotive News that a standard Level 2 charging station cable contains around 2.27kg of copper encased in heavy insulation.

"It is completely Sisyphean to try to get money out of coated, small wires," Allan said, noting that the time, fuel, and risk required often outweigh the potential profit.

The price of copper has risen from around £4.50 per pound in late 2023 to over £5.30 per pound in mid-2024. Despite this, the relatively small amount of EV cables means theft remains an uneconomical, but still growing, crime.

To combat the problem, companies are deploying a range of deterrents:

Protective Sleeves: Finnish firm Kempower has introduced its "Cable Guard," a reinforced sheath designed to make cutting cables more difficult.

Dye Sprays: Catstrap manufactures cables that release blue dye when cut, marking thieves for identification. This system has reportedly been spotted on some Tesla Superchargers.

Labelling and Identification: Tesla has begun stamping "Property of Tesla" into its copper wiring to deter legitimate recyclers from purchasing stolen materials.

Alarm Systems: Some operators have installed cameras and alarms that activate when cables are tampered with, alerting staff and scaring off offenders.

The theft problem has also sparked policy discussions. In Australia, proposals to tighten scrap metal regulations include mandatory recycler registration, proof-of-identity requirements, cryptocurrency payment bans, and fines for dealers who purchase stolen materials.

In the UK, industry voices are calling for similar measures, warning that the current lack of regulation allows stolen copper to be sold with little oversight. Without stricter controls, charging operators fear that theft could undermine the reliability of the country's growing EV infrastructure.

As Britain continues its transition to electric mobility, suppliers warn that protecting charging stations will be critical to ensuring public confidence in EV adoption.