



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### INTERNET ARTICLE

#### Infrastructure theft costs SA R5 billion a year

8 December 2014

*The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation held public hearings at the beginning of December 2014 to address vandalism and theft of water infrastructure in the country.*

*The committee met on 1 December 2014 in Parliament, Cape Town in the Western Cape and was briefed in detail about the theft of copper cable, as well as pipes, pumps and other equipment, which costs South Africa more than R5 billion a year.*

*The committee heard that copper thieves are paid as little as R7 a kilogram for the metal by unscrupulous scrap metal dealers while the damage caused by stealing the cable amounts to millions of Rands.*

*Committee Chairperson, Lulu Johnson, lamented the fact that there was little interest shown by the public in this critical matter.*

*Johnson encouraged stronger action against copper cable thieves but also against the scrap metal industry. He also urged communities to come forward when witnessing such crimes and not to stand by idly.*

*He said it was communities, schools, hospitals and the elderly that were suffering due to vandalism and theft of such infrastructure. This was also a blow to the country's economy.*

*The South African Police Service indicated they had a difficult time in terms of getting convictions against copper thieves as they were in most cases unable to track the owners of the stolen goods.*

*They suggested that scrap metal dealers should institute electronic banking payments for such transactions which will make it easier for the police to trace suspects and difficult for thieves to sell stolen copper.*

*The committee suggested that declaring copper a precious metal might address the problem as penalties will be similar to those when suspects are found in possession of gold or diamonds.*

*Johnson indicated that the Committee will plan a surprise oversight visit to a scrap metal dealer. "It is not going to be business as usual for scrap metal companies.*

*He stressed that the Committee will also look at the work of the Inter-Ministerial Task Team on this matter in an effort to get solutions to the theft of copper cables.*

*The Minister of the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) Nomvula Mokonyane has been vocal against the theft of infrastructure which she said deny peace loving South Africans an opportunity to enjoy and access clean water to their houses.*



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*This problem, according to the Minister, is related to the theft of copper wires which incapacitate not only water supplies, but also impede electricity distributions to the communities.*

*Communities have been urged to look after this infrastructure, which government, through State President Jacob Zuma and Minister Mokonyane said they should be proud of them and “should also own them.”*

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**Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation**

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