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Construction Newsletter

November 2014

Hello

The recent increase in commercial and residential construction has also seen the increase in theft and damage to not only the building sites but also to small one-man operations such as builders, electricians and plumbers.

Whilst this trend tends to be national, the Melbourne market has spiked above other areas. We cannot stress the importance of safe secure storage of tools, equipment and building materials. We are all aware of the many stories and incidents where building sites have been hit, tradies' utes broken into and damage caused for no reason at all. Having been in business for nearly 30 years, we continually see the damage and financial stress the theft of tools and equipment can cause.

With the Christmas and New Year season nearly upon us, and many businesses and tradies taking a well deserved break, make sure your tools and equipment are safe and secure.

Allianz Insurance (who offers insurance products for tradies) put together this informative piece:

Tradies should lock up their tools: theft trends

The tools don't make the tradie, but it's near impossible to do a job without them! Regardless of the industry or trade, filling your tool box with all the essentials can be costly. If they go missing or become damaged, you'll be unable to do your job and have to replace or repair them. Residential building sites in CBD areas are have a higher theft and damage rate compared to sites in suburbs. Lock up your tools to prevent loss and damage. For business owners, the stakes are higher because an incomplete, missing or damaged tool set can bring your entire business to a standstill - losing you money and, potentially, customers. We take a look at the cost and impact of theft in residential building sites across Australia.

Several years ago the Australian Institute of Criminology conducted a study on the extent and nature of on-site theft from residential building sites across Australia. The results show that risk of theft is highest in the final stages of construction, occurring at close to completion of a housing project. Building sites in CBD areas were more likely to encounter theft compared to inner-city suburbs, outer suburbs and regional towns - 44% of sites in CBD areas had been subject to theft, while only 40% of sites in suburbs and 30% in major regional towns were recorded as victims of theft.

The patterns of theft show that raw materials, such as bricks, pavers, electrical cables, pipes, timber and tiles were the most frequently stolen items on a building site, followed by hand-held tools. Unsurprisingly, thefts occurred most commonly on open-site premises. The research also found that nearly one-third of all theft victims stated that the incident involved some forced entry.

Of course, there are some ways to prevent tool damage or theft and that is to be proactive.

Minimise the risks by:

- **Storing them securely.** Make sure your tools are locked away and out of plain sight when they are not in use. Storage should be in a **lockable, quality solid steel tool or site boxes.**
- **Only using what you need.** Bring out tools that you will need to use and leave others stored securely in your locked vehicle tool or site box. Better yet, secure unused tools in your locked storage space.
- **Labelling them.** Put your name or an individual mark on your tools that will make them easy to identify as yours or your company's. Engraving is best recommended
- **Having an inventory.** Accounting for and checking off each tool at the beginning and end of the day will enable you to easily pinpoint the time and place where a tool went missing. Each employee should do this, so consider making a checklist for cross-checking.

Getting everyone on board, educate your employees on protecting tools and keeping them secure. Insuring your tools. Take out a general property cover that covers for damaged or stolen tools.



[Safe Custody Storage Buildings](#)

This Store-Safe store was purchased by the NSW RTA (now RMS) in the early 2000's and has been a permanent fixture at the Partridge VS rest stop storing road signs, tools and break-down equipment.

Advice from Victorian Police for builders & tradies ...

Building site thefts and damages are ongoing issues for police and are continually represented in our monthly crime reports. The cost to the wider community, including business owners, owner-builders and insurance companies is huge.

- It is easy and convenient for tradespeople to leave their tools on site overnight or over the weekend once a building gets to lock- up, but if the premises or on-site shed does not have adequate security, the chances of becoming a victim increases dramatically.
- Thieves target building sites for building materials and household items such as timber and roof tiles, hot water systems and air conditioning units, kitchen appliances like ovens and stove tops, kitchen fittings such as cupboards and range hoods, bathroom fittings, windows and doors, landscaping tools and items like pavers and plants. Tools and equipment being stolen out of tradies' utes is also a major issue.

- By tightening your personal and business security you will lower your chances of becoming a victim. There are many ways to safeguard your property and prevent your tools, building equipment and delivered household items from being stolen by burglars and thieves who prey on inadequately secured construction sites and tradies' vehicles.

SPIKE IN MELBOURNE TRADE THEFT

Site & Ute Thefts in Melbourne – October 2014: ABOUT \$57,000 worth of tools has been stolen from vehicles parked in Moonee Valley over the past three months. Tradies are being urged to keep their equipment secure and take steps to make them easier to track if they go missing. Sergeant Darren Hinchcliffe of Moonee Valley's crime scene services said the suburbs hit the hardest were Keilor East and Moonee Ponds. "There's a lot of building activity in those areas and people living in suburban areas seem to leave their vehicles parked on the street," Sgt Hinchcliffe said. "Most thieves have cut open locks and jemmy opened the back of vehicle trays." Tradies should park their vehicles off the street in garages overnight or put their tools inside if possible.

"Some of them are young tradesmen who've got no insurance and they've had \$8000 worth of their tools stolen and they are absolutely distraught. It's their livelihood placed at risk," he said.

"People have got to be aware that sometimes thieves will come back to the same location within a few weeks and again steal from the area because they know what's there."

Tools stolen include electric drills, saws and impact hammers. Carpenter Brett Thomas, who works at Valley Lake estate in Keilor East, said he engraved his tools and bought equipment installed with DataDot technology after his vehicle was hit seven months ago. Mr Thomas said someone broke into his ute during the day and took \$1500 worth of cordless drills and a power saw. Police advise that tools and equipment should be store in hard-to-break into boxes and cabinets to deter petty theft.



[Store-Safe Tool Boxes, Site Boxes, Security Cabinets and Stores](#)

Increase in tool & site theft in SE Melbourne suburbs: TALK to a tradie on any building site across Melbourne and chances are they have had tools or equipment stolen, or know someone who has. Homeowners suffer too, with the industry forced to raise building and renovation prices to factor in the costs. With hundreds of thefts from Glen Eira building sites and commercial properties annually, fed-up police want to raise awareness of how common and far-reaching it is.

Glen Eira crime prevention officer Leading Senior Constable Peter Stefaniw says thieves are swiping anything from whitegoods to window frames, tools, hot water systems, copper piping and wiring, even scaffolding. "They're taking anything that can be carried away," he said. He said site managers, homeowners and tradies can better control with simple measures including:

- **INSTALLING CCTV** cameras on-site.
- **BEFRIENDING** worksite neighbours.
- **SECURING** your tools overnight and on weekends in strong and damage-proof boxes and storage facilities.
- **LIMITING** the number of access keys handed out.
- **ORGANISING** delivery of goods when workers are on-site.

The Leader visited three Glen Eira worksites recently, and every tradie had a story to tell. Stephen Collins said thieves have targeted two of the building sites he has been working. Building site supervisor Stephen Collins is mindful of security. Tradesmen on a building site on Bambra Rd, Caulfield South, had their secure site box damaged when bolt-cutter-carrying thieves tried to break into it. Another site lost \$4000 in tools in an overnight raid six weeks ago. Site supervisor Stephen Collins has worked in the industry for 13 years, is mindful of site security and has only once been a victim of worksite theft. He said it created a minefield of insurance paperwork and downtime. At a commercial building site on Kooyong Rd, foreman James McKillop said he had been “lucky” on his current job. Security is, he says, paramount in commercial work. “For me to keep the job on program we can’t have any setbacks,” he said. Source: Glen Eira Leader.

COPPER PIPE THEFTS IN NORTH WESTERN SYDNEY



Audacious thieves struck twice at plumbing wholesaler in North Rocks at the weekend triggering a police chase in the early hours of this morning. Police were alerted to a break-in at Cook’s Plumbing in Loyalty Rd at 3am and arrived to find a break-in in progress. They say that a number of 6m long copper pipes weighing 120kg each had been loaded onto the back of a truck.

When police arrived the truck drove off, turning into North Rocks Rd with the police car in pursuit. The police car had to dodge falling copper pipes as the truck reached speeds of 120km/h as it headed from North Rocks to Oatlands and out to Pennant Hills Rd.

Police lost sight of it in a side street off Pennant Hills Rd after they took evasive action to avoid five copper pipes which had fallen from the back of the truck. There was an earlier break in at Cook’s Plumbing on Sunday at 3.15am. It is not known yet if the thieves took anything in the Sunday break-in. The weekend theft comes two months after thieves stole at least 22 copper pipes and fittings from the same warehouse. No-one has yet been charged over that break in.

Bungling thieves loaded a quantity of copper piping into two trailers but the weight caused one of the vehicles to jackknife not far from the warehouse in Loyalty Rd. Witnesses told police that a dual axle trailer which was being towed by a gold Holden sedan appeared to jack knife in the street resulting in the six metre lengths of copper pipe hitting the road and causing the trailer to lift off the ground. A man from the second car, believed to be a white Holden Rodeo or Mazda Bravo, unhitched the trailer from the

Holden. The Holden drove away leaving the trailer in the Loyalty Road. The second vehicle also towing a double axel trailer with a cage on it were last seen on North Rocks Rd travelling towards Parramatta. Anyone with any information is asked to call **Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000**.

News from Camden (NSW) Local Area Command Facebook page: Construction site thefts hit home ownersthe Camden LAC is presently the highest new residential growth area in Australia and so experience a lot incidents involving construction sites. Each year across the state millions of dollars are lost on home building and commercial construction sites due to theft and vandalism. Theft from residential construction sites account for 1% of the construction cost of a new home, these costs are usually passed onto the home buyer. Thieves are resourceful and will steal anything from tools and household fittings to copper wiring and pipe. Without a market for the stolen goods they are of no value so police would encourage anyone who is aware of items being offered for sale other than in a retail setting they should contact police.

More Building Site Theft Hits Tradies;

TOOWOOMBA – October 2014: Builder Stuart Hopkins is fed up with having his livelihood threatened by callous thieves who steal his tools. The building contractor said, anecdotally, there appeared to have been a rise in thefts from building sites for him and his fellow tradies. This was despite police saying the number of tool thefts had decreased since earlier in the year.

Mr Hopkins experienced the frustration of being burgled yesterday after someone broke into a house which he was building in the new Sanctuary Rise estate on Greenwattle St. Hand tools, a Makita radio and an 18 volt battery charger were among items taken between 4.30pm Tuesday and 6.30am yesterday. "They have taken anything they could get their hands on pretty quickly," Mr Hopkins said. A hole had been punched through a wall which had no external brickwork.

The theft came about eight weeks after Mr Hopkins had tools including a nail gun and trimmer stolen from a Long St job site. "Obviously, if your gear goes missing you can't do your job. "It is the inconvenience of it." He said he had to wear the cost because claiming tools on insurance didn't really pay off due to excess charges. "It is just more the down time than anything and it is your livelihood. "We've had gear knocked off in the past but it is getting more and more."

We hope that you have found the information in this newsletter interesting and informative. With the Christmas - New Year break only weeks away, ensure that your tools and equipment a safe and secure using a Store-Safe tool box, site box, ute box or even a large store for larger equipment or valuable building materials. For further information check out our web site at store-safe.com or Like & Follow Us on Facebook.

We wish you all a safe and Merry Christmas.

Kind regards,

Grant Breeze
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