

SACCI Copper Theft Barometer

According to estimates, copper cable theft is a crime that is costing South Africa approximately R5 billion per annum. Due to the nature and severity of the issues pertinent to copper cable theft, SACCI felt it imperative to investigate the matter further and establish a tool to monitor the level of cable theft regularly. This investigation led to the formation of SACCI's Copper Cable Theft Barometer, which represents the cost of cable theft as experienced by Transnet, Eskom, and Telkom.

During the past decade, South Africa has experienced rising levels of copper cable theft in many parts of the country. Various measures have been put in place by local municipalities and the relevant service providers in an attempt to prevent cable theft. However, copper cable theft remains a concern due to increased activity by organised criminals and syndicates amid growing local and international demand for copper, in light of rising commodity prices. The cost of copper cable theft in South Africa is estimated at R5 billion per annum as this is a crime that affects telecommunications, electricity supply, and rail services. Because thieves often rip out the drywall to strip the plumbing and wire, the cost to repair in effect dwarfs the actual loss of the copper.

The indirect repercussions of copper cable theft are on a much larger scale and cost the South African economy even more per annum. These indirect effects include the poor service delivery, negative investor perception of South Africa, and power outages that could result in the shutting down on many businesses, among other factors.

The First Copper Theft Barometer was issued in December 2010 and has been issued monthly since then, the last in May 2011.