

Material Thefts on School Sites

Recently, there have been a number of thefts of building materials such as copper pipe, copper wiring and other materials which have been stolen from school sites. The following guidelines will help to enable us to aid the police in their investigation of theft. We, as custodians, are usually the first school employees to arrive at the school in the morning. The following are easy and safe steps that all custodians can follow:

1. First and foremost, is your responsibility for insuring the safety of the students, staff, school community and yourself. If you happen upon a potential theft scene, assess the safety of the area. Immediate danger will always take precedence over preservation of the crime scene. If necessary, and you can safely secure utilities, do so. Cordon off the area to prevent access, and notify the proper personnel immediately.
2. Be a good observer. If you notice a gate with the lock cut open, enter from another gate. There may be latent (evidence not visual to the naked eye) evidence that you do not want to compromise. Do not touch the gate or the surrounding areas. Contact school police immediately.
3. If you surprise the “suspect(s) in the act of removing the materials, do not confront them. They may be armed and you quite possibly could be in jeopardy. Remove yourself safely and quickly.
4. If you observe a ground “vault”, a door or any other intrusion to the site, do not enter the area. The scene must be preserved so the police can gather all available evidence. Keep a perimeter of twenty five feet clear of the immediate center of concern. Each person that walks on the scene potentially destroys evidence that may be used to capture the individual(s) responsible for the intrusion. Use chairs to set up the perimeter and then place yellow caution tape from one chair to another.
5. If it is necessary to turn off a power, gas or water source, use the switch or valve that does not compromise the area of intrusion.
6. Prevent other individuals from “observing” the scene to limit the foot traffic to and from the area. Do not drive any vehicles near the scene.
7. If it is raining or there are high winds, make every effort to protect the scene from the elements. Use a large plastic cover to protect the area in question. Limit the foot intrusion on the scene.

By following these simple steps, we can have a safe and positive impact on all our sites.