





Research and analysis of metal theft has found the following general trends:

**PLACE:** Metals are ever-present in contemporary society, meaning that opportunities for metal theft are widespread. Places that appear particularly vulnerable to metal theft are railway networks, abandoned housing and churches and graveyards. These concentration patterns are attributed to a lack of guardianship at such locations.

Research in the U.S. shows that metal theft tends to be higher in cities with a greater number of scrap metal yards per 100,000 residents. Given the finding that offenders often prefer stealing items that they can sell quickly and easily, it is plausible that an easily accessible, specialised market for metals might act as an incentive to steal.

**OFFENDER:** Metal thieves can be organised into two broad groups: those that steal metal-bearing items (thieves) and those involved in the trade in stolen metals (scrap metal buyers). The former is comprised of three types of offender:

The opportunist. These offenders may not purposefully seek out metals to steal but will exploit easy opportunities where adequate guardianship is lacking.

Organised groups. These offenders tend to steal large quantities of metals and have good knowledge of the scrap metal industry.

Drug addicts. It is commonly stated that drug addicts steal metals to feed their habit. These offenders likely steal small amounts of metal that can easily be sold for profit.

Scrap metal buyers play a key role in the metal theft problem. They are responsible for converting stolen metals into cash (or in some cases drugs), t8.8 TBT1 0 0 1 77.304 335.535(m)-3(e)mo70.85 Tm[Tm 0 l



The recent surge in metal thefts has prompted the implementation of several prevention schemes.

## GENERAL RESOURCES

Kooi, B. (2010). Theft of Scrap Metal. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Series. Guide No. 58. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Available at: [http://www.popcenter.org/problems/metal\\_theft/](http://www.popcenter.org/problems/metal_theft/)

Sutton, M. (2010). Stolen Goods Markets. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Series. Guide No. 57. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Available at: [http://www.popcenter.org/problems/stolen\\_goods/](http://www.popcenter.org/problems/stolen_goods/)

Metal Theft website: [www.metaltheft.net/](http://www.metaltheft.net/)

## UK GOVERNMENT REPORTS

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## A SELECTION OF ACADEMIC PAPERS AND BOOK CHAPTERS

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Sidebottom, A., Belur, J., Bowers, K., Tompson, L. & Johnson, S. D. (2011). Theft in price-volatile markets: on the relationship between copper price and copper theft. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*. Vol 48(3), pp. 396-418.

Whiteacre, K., Medler, L., Rhoton, D. and Howes, R.. (2008). Indianapolis Metals Theft Project: Metal Thefts Database Pilot Study. University of Indianapolis, Community Research Center.