

30th July 2021

Cable Theft

Having trouble with your internet connection?

It could be your router, or atmospheric, too many people on your band width or someone has actually stolen the broadband cable !

Organised crime gangs are going around and stealing the underground broadband cables due to the high value of copper at present — £4000 per ton.

Last year in Essex alone 12,000 homes were affected by the theft of broadband cables. This can then mean up to a 2 week wait before the cable can be replaced and the customer is connected back to the internet.

For this reason, Essex Police are working with British Telecom and Openreach in order to try and stamp out this crime through target hardening and raising awareness of this crime.

How do they steal underground cable?

BT and Openreach access their cables through manholes throughout their entire network. The criminals find a quiet road, often in a rural setting, and lift a manhole cover. They then cut through the cable and attach the cable to a 4 wheel drive vehicle. They then literally drive off and drag the cable out of the manhole.

The cable, which could be as long as 150 metres and weighs 2.2tons is then dragged behind the vehicle for often several miles to a quiet farmers field where it is cut up into manageable lengths.

Whilst the cable is being dragged, it whips around and due to it's sheer weight, it often causes damage to road signs, parked cars, buildings and would cause severe injury to anyone walking by at the time.



If you have any information about possible organised crime, victims of such crime or vulnerable people subject of exploitation, please inform Essex Police or CrimeStoppers on 0800 555111

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Before this cable can be sold to a scrap dealer, the cable is stripped of its plastic covering in order to make it unidentifiable. This is either done via a mechanical process, using a machine like the one shown below or by setting fire to the cable and melting off the plastic covering. When burning the plastic gives off a very distinctive thick black smoke as seen in the picture below.

Offence Times

Most offences reported have occurred overnight, however it has been known for Organised Gangs to set up fake roadworks, with road signs, cones and Hi-Viz jackets in order to commit these offences during daytime.

How to report possible offences, concerns or to give information

If you have any information about people involved in cable thefts, you are not sure if roadworks are genuine or you see the distinctive smoke, please report this via one of the below methods.

If possible please try and obtain any vehicle index numbers of any suspicious vehicles.

BT have their own dedicated helpdesk for reporting possible offences or for giving information — 0800 321 999

Essex Police via 999 for offences being committed at that time or via 101 or online at www.essex.police.uk

CrimeStoppers in order to give information anonymously — 0800 555 111



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