



Written Testimony in Support of SB219

For the House Judiciary Committee

May 2, 2019

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Theft of scrap metal (copper, steel, and aluminum) is an ongoing problem that is styming law enforcement, utilities, commercial businesses, schools, churches and other entities. Even the word “scrap” is misleading, because most of what is stolen is not in fact scrap - it is good, operating, sometimes even new material. Scrap implies that it was someone’s discarded or used up material, when in fact that normally is not the case.

In the HVAC world, air conditioners are prime targets because of the copper and aluminum coils, fins and other parts in an outdoor condenser. They’re worth a small fraction of the cost of the entire unit, but some thieves still steal and destroy A/C units for a pile of scrap metal worth as little as \$20. Another impact, often overlooked, is environmental. The thieves cut the refrigerant lines on working A/C units and unlawfully release the charge into the atmosphere. This is illegal, and EPA fines, when handed down, are swift and severe. The fine for releasing refrigerant into the atmosphere can be up to \$27,500 per day per violation. The EPA can also award up to \$10,000 to the person who notified them of the violation if the person releasing the refrigerant is convicted. Further, when thieves are transporting stolen units, they often knowingly or unknowingly dump compressor oil on the ground, which also creates an environmental hazard.

As with any business trying to prevent the theft of copper and other metals, there is an ongoing cost. We recently incurred \$2,100 in expenses due to attempted metal theft. And that was just one incident. Other instances have resulted in damages to fencing, vehicles, and the additional costs to install lights and security measures. It is an ongoing problem that impacts the HVAC community and its customers, because even failed attempts at stealing copper can leave homeowners’ and businesses’ A/C units extensively damaged and in need of costly repairs.

BlueDot applauds the legislature for looking at solutions for this ongoing problem, and we appreciate the opportunity to offer our perspective on how scrap metal theft is impacting the HVAC community.