

\$25,000 Dollar Transformers Stolen; Copper Value Likely Behind Theft

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(hannibal.net) - The Hannibal Board of Public Works has acknowledged that thieves recently made off with a pair of electrical transformers that had been located at the former St. Elizabeth Hospital at 109 Virginia St.



Jared Stewart, electric line superintendent for the BPW, reports that two transformers - a 500 kilo volt-amperes (kVA) and a 750 kVA - had been taken. Neither of the devices had electricity flowing through them at the time they were removed, according to Stewart.

"They were able to be used," he said. "They've had some issues with people taking copper from inside (the building). We couldn't turn it (power) on until they re-did their service."

The cost of replacing the equipment is not cheap.

"If I had to buy new transformers it would be about \$10,000 for the 500 and about \$15,000 for the 750," he said.

While it is not known exactly when the transformers were taken, it was noted on the afternoon of Jan. 13 that a BPW worker requested that Marion County 911 dispatch an HPD officer to the former health-care center regarding the theft of equipment.

This is not the first time BPW materials have been taken from the former hospital, which more recently served as the Chapel Hill Professional Building, until it closed its doors on June 1, 2009.

"We did get a call for a (storage cabinet) door open, I would say two months ago," said Stewart. "They had broken in the (cabinet) door and taken the copper out of the inside of it."

"We fixed the door and put a new lock on it, then the next thing we knew they (transformers) were both gone."

Wiring is not the only copper product to be taken from the site. In April 2011 it was reported to the Courier-Post that thieves had made off with a number of copper pipes from the mechanical room.

Just last week Building Inspector Joey Burnham condemned the complex after discovering potential safety issues inside the building while accompanying the Fire Department during an investigation of smoke coming from the structure.