



Warren C. Evans
Sheriff

News Release

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Release Date: February 22, 2008

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Sheriff testifies at Senate copper theft hearing

◆ *Evans says efforts should focus on scrap dealers that accept stolen metal*

DETROIT – Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans today testified before a state Senate panel on the epidemic of copper theft in the city of Detroit and its impact on the public's overall health and safety.

Evans told members of the Senate Economic Development and Regulatory Reform Committee meeting at the Northwest Activities Center in Detroit that while copper theft may appear on the surface to be a petty, victimless crime, it poses a serious threat to citizens.

“Although copper theft is occurring in cities across the country, we are being particularly hard hit here in Detroit and elsewhere in Wayne County,” Evans said. “The impact of that is that lives of people are put at risk and our communities are less safe.”

Evans pointed specifically to the theft of copper telephone wires and the impact on 911 service and emergency communications every time a phone line is cut. In 2007, there were 425 cases of telephone wire being cut and stolen in and around Detroit. In most of those cases, the ability of citizens in that immediate area to call 911 from their home phone was interrupted.

“Much of our vital communications infrastructure – like 911 service – is carried on copper wire,” Evans continued. “When those wires are cut, stolen and stripped, residents and communities are cut off from the emergency police, fire and ambulance services they need. We need to inform the public of this problem, get tough on the people responsible and stop this crime before a real tragedy occurs.”

Evans said he supports proposed legislation that would create tighter restrictions and stiffer penalties, particularly regarding scrap yards that Evans says often knowingly accept stolen copper and other precious metals.

“Chasing the crooks cutting down copper phone lines or ripping out some copper plumbing from a vacant home will get you only so far. The real impact will have to be made by focusing on the scrap yards that serve as the financial outlet for the copper thieves in the first place,” Evans said.