

Hi-tech bid to reduce metal thefts

AN INVISIBLE chemical is to be used to catch metal thieves.

The surge in the price of copper, lead and other metals has led to a huge increase in the number of thefts in Sussex, especially electricity cables.

But EDF Energy Networks has now formed a partnership with contractors MEMS Power Generation to mark pieces of equipment with SmartWater, a state-of-the-art security system which uses a traceable liquid chemical code.

SmartWater is only visible under ultraviolet light and is almost impossible to remove. It stays on human skin and hair for weeks and is detectable on clothing for even longer.

Colin Barden, a senior EDF manager, said: "Tampering with live high-voltage power lines is incredibly dangerous and thieves could pay with their lives.

"They not only risk their own lives but recklessly endanger others and jeopardise local power supplies. We will continue to do everything we can to stop them and to assist the police."

If the chemical is found on stolen goods or suspects themselves police will be able to trace it back to MEMS Power Generation, which provides temporary generators for EDF customers.

MEMS will work with police to set up covert operations to target repeat offenders and theft hotspots. Anyone who spots suspicious activity should call police on **0845 6070999**.