

INTERNATIONAL UTILITIES REVENUE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

IURPA

INC.

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From the Chairperson

I hope this newsletter finds all of you well. In the spring IURPA newsletter I wrote to introduce myself to those who do not know me and to tell you a little about myself. I also noted the importance of attending conferences and networking with the Revenue Protection professionals from around the world. I was so looking forward to attending the 2012 IURPA/SCRPA/SURPA Training Seminar held in New Orleans in June. Unfortunately after encouraging everyone to attend I was unable to go to the most important conference of the year. Due to pending contract negotiations at NSTAR all personal and business time off was put on hold. Thankfully the contract was signed, unfortunately not in time to travel to New Orleans.

I would like to thank Wayne Wohler of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power for stepping up to the plate to take my place as the conference chairperson. Wayne successfully led the IURPA board meeting and completed all the duties requested by the organization. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Woody, George, Wayne, Jeff, Eddie, Greg and Itzick for taking care of the IURPA business at the conference.

My next opportunity to attend a conference was the NURPA conference in Glens Falls New York. After attending this conference for the past 18 years I was truly looking forward to interacting with my fellow Revenue Protection professionals from the Northeast. The committee had a solid agenda put together, however with budget cuts affecting many companies attendance was going to be very low. Unfortunately the low number of attendees will not yield a successful conference. This being said the committee made the difficult decision to



Pal Uhlman
IURPA Chairperson

cancel the 2012 NURPA Conference. Hopefully the travel budgets will ease a bit in 2013 and we will have the opportunity to re-unite with fellow Revenue Protection friends.

We are all aware of the importance of networking at conferences. The networking value to us professionals in this field is near priceless. I would like for you to know that even if you are not able to attend a conference, you are still a valuable IURPA member. Being an IURPA member means being part of a network of professionals who are willing to help with questions and issues associated with this often-time stressful profession. If you have a question or an issue with a case and you need advice, please get in touch with the IURPA community for assistance. If you have a request or suggestion for a training program or presentation for a future conference, please get in touch with IURPA. The IURPA website has information as well as contacts for board members. The site is also a way for members to report news and interesting facts discovered in this always evolving and ever growing profession.

Being an IURPA member means being part of a network of professionals who are willing to help with questions and issues associated with this often-time stressful profession.

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Thank-you again to the IURPA board for all they have accomplished so far this year. To all of our members, you can be assured that IURPA as well as all regional boards continue to work hard to provide everyone the opportunity to attend quality training programs and conferences.

I know I missed a great IURPA conference this year and the SCRPA/SURPA boards should be commended for all their hard work putting together a wonderful training seminar in the great City of New Orleans. I hope they all feel proud for having put together a successful conference. I hope they also know that the Revenue Protection community around the world is now thinking of all of our friends and co-workers in the gulf coast area while they deal with the damage and floods from Hurricane Isaac. You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

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A BROTHERHOOD LIKE NO OTHER

By DAVID SANCHES, REVENUE SECURITY UNIT, LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER

I work for The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) Revenue Security Unit (RSU). RSU is comprised of 5 Investigators. That's right, only five. The largest municipally owned utility with over 8,000 DWP employees, and 4.1 million customers, and there are only 5 of us. Our coverage area spans from Venice Beach to East Los Angeles, from San Pedro Harbor to the Santa Susanna Mountains. 465 square miles of some of the most beautiful, and dare I say not so pleasant areas. Of course there's our expert biller, and our fearless leader Mr. Wayne "The Boss" Wohler, also affectionately called "The Wolf". But for the most part it's our brotherhood / sisterhood, that keep's this unit rolling. No matter the situation, I know that my fellow inves-tigators have my back.



David Sanchez

Some might say I'm a bit of an elitist. Well to that I say... Thank you. When referencing the numbers I mentioned above. Five to 8,000, or 5 to 4.1 million, I think I've earned the right to be somewhat proud of this unit. Especially the people I get to work with on a daily basis. And if you're reading this, then I'm sure you have first hand knowledge of utility theft and the common denominators that go along with facing this nation's third largest theft problem. It starts with simply coming to work. Sometimes tired, sometimes dragging from exhaustion. But I know my fellow investigators are there for support. We all know each others family history, life stories, and what our favorite drink is that will help us forget the week. For me this is all important. As you might know you can't walk this job a lone wolf and expect to keep your sanity. Each one of us brings something different to the job. There are always different ideas and a different outlook on how to approach any situation in the safest and surest manner.

This is why IURPA and WSUTA are so important to this unit. As we expand our knowledge and understanding of what our fellow investigators throughout the world experience. Much like my numbers I listed above. The ratio of investigators from country to country, compared to the potential theft throughout the planet is similar. We as investigators must reach out to one another and share our experiences with each other through associations like IURPA and WSUTA. We are a pretty elite investigation family.

RSU investigators aren't sworn officers; we don't carry a firearm. We're not out to put ourselves in harms way. We're here to simply protect the revenue of the Department and make it home the same way we left in the morning. We go out daily armed with knowledge, and a street sense that allows us to carry out whatever the task at hand. As you are aware utility theft occurs across all social, cultural, racial, and economic levels.

Much like law enforcement, the majority of the people we come across on a daily basis are, shall we say, stretching the truth.

Then, of course, there are always those folks who somehow have no knowledge of what's occurring on their private property... Sure they don't.

With over 23 years under my belt, and the last 4 with RSU, I'm still the rookie of the unit. Still learning from the different situations found in the field, still learning from associations like IURPA and WSUTA, and still learning from my co-workers, and the boss.

I have expanded the family type connection to the other units and agencies that I interact with daily. Like our Electric Trouble unit, and law enforcement agencies. This makes work more like and experience, rather than just punching the clock.

IURPA and WSUTA expand that family atmosphere and knowledge base to the world's investigators. I have no idea what problems the next investigation will bring, but I know it's nothing me and my DWP family can't handle. After all there is no brotherhood quite like this brotherhood.

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"If You Build It... THEY WILL COME"

BY DAVID WHIDDEN, REVENUE PROTECTION SUPERVISOR, THE UNITED ILLUMINATING COMPANY

I'm sure you've heard this saying made popular by the film "Field of Dreams". "If you build it, they will come." Well sometimes that doesn't come to pass. This year's NURPA gathering in Glens Falls had to be cancelled because we couldn't get enough attendees. In fairness, this is the nature of our industry and these things tend to go in cycles. We've all been through the lean, belt tightening years. Things will ease again and thinking positively, these lean years bring an increase in our line of work. If your utility is currently attempting to combat fraud then you know that it's absolutely gotten to viral proportions. Fraud is not new to us at the United Illuminating Company but how we attack it is. We are fortunate enough to have hired two fraud investigators in the last two years and let me assure you they earn their pay every day. It's incredible what desperate people will attempt to get away with! Identity theft. Theft of a minor child's identity. Theft of a deceased person's identity. Forgery of medical protection documents. The list goes on and on. Our fraud investigators have crafted some excellent, well documented cases to present to



David Whidden

the local police so that they can then pursue an arrest warrant. Many of those warrants have led to solid arrests and prosecution. The important part is that we've been able to foster a good working relationship with our local law enforcement and we've been able to stop many of these folks from stealing from our honest hardworking ratepayers (not to mention recouping some of our losses). I'm sure many of you are saying "big deal, we have our own tales of glory and arrests to be proud of." I hope that's true but here's what concerns me. As I said earlier, it is indeed a lean year and we all know from past experience that the bean counters sometimes turn their attention to Revenue Protection when they're looking to cut costs. It's crucial that you press your police associates to release information of the arrests to your local media outlets so that your customers know what a service you are providing them. It's also vital that you put together an executive summary of the details of the arrest so that your management is aware of the facts and the fact that your company is hard at work protecting the ratepayers. With a little luck, I'll see all my regional friends next year in Glens Falls and hopefully the other regional groups will have success as well.

Detectent is the recognized leader in providing analytical revenue protection solutions to combat theft of energy.

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SMART METERS ARE NOT ALL BAD

By PAUL UNRUH - ComEd

We know there is a lot of angst among revenue protection professionals about smart meters. After all, our “eyes” in the field (the meter reader) are going away. In the past, rev pro has relied on those “eyes” to report cut seals, holes in the meter cover and more. With the AMI meter, we are told not to worry, the tamper codes sent by the meter will tell us everything we need to know. Old guys like me can be a bit skeptical!



Paul Unruh

*The technology is here
and it's not going away*

We've heard the stories shared by other utilities telling about the multitudes of meter events and tamper codes the meter sends and the difficulty in trying to figure out which codes need field action and which can be ignored. At ComEd, we've tried to learn from our AMI pilot and from the lessons learned and shared by our peers in rev pro conferences (one of the many benefits of attending a regional or IURPA conference) and on the pages of this publication. I'd like to focus on a case where the AMI smart meter has been a valuable asset for ComEd Revenue Protection.

The ongoing case involves an inactive account in Bellwood, Illinois. The former customer, who still resides in this apartment charged off over \$3100 and has used service inactively since. At ComEd, we do use the remote disconnect switch to cut service to inactive accounts. The process is manual. We have an employee (or intern, if available) process the remote disconnect, one meter at a time, in the AMI head end system. ComEd remotely disconnected this customer several times for the inactive consumption only to have the offender self-restore. After each self-restore, we sent a field tech to investigate the meter events and tamper flags being sent back to the AMI head end system. Due to damage done to the meter, a meter exchange had to be performed at each investigation. After each exchange, we had to remotely disconnect the new meter again.

Thanks to the AMI meter, we knew in a near real-time fashion when this customer attempted to self-restore. Over the last couple of weeks, this person has self-restored despite the presence of multiple locks on the meter cabinet and a locking ring. Each time the offender used Allan wrenches as jumpers in the meter socket. In fact, a couple more self-

restores and someone will have a nice new set of Allan wrenches for their tool box! The AMI meter accurately told us through last gap and power restore messages that the customer had been in the meter fitting. The meter events and tamper codes didn't lie and not one field trip was wasted. Prior to AMI, we would either made a visit to the premise to check status, or wait for the next monthly meter reading to see progressive consumption or get a meter readers report of additional tampering.

After the most recent self-restore, Corporate Security, along with the building owner's cooperation, had a lineman cut service to the building for a brief time so that the load wires in the offenders meter fitting could be insulated with electrical tape, thus not allowing electricity to pass through to the offender's apartment even if jumpers were successfully installed. For now, this offender has not figured out that his load wires are taped he does not have electrical service. The meter is checked several times each day through the AMI network for evidence of tampering.



This is not the first case where the smart meter has been an ally for rev pro. There have been several other cases prior to this case where we had a good idea what we were going to find before we even got out of the car upon arrival at the premise. So, while there is still much to learn about AMI, the good news is that meter events and tamper flags can be meaningful. AMI won't eliminate every field trip, but when the right sequence of events are present, the codes can give you a very good idea of what is going on with the meter in a much quicker timeframe that the monthly read did. AMI will change the way Rev Pro does business. The technology is here and it's not going away. We need to adapt and use the new technology to our advantage in order to defeat the bad guys.

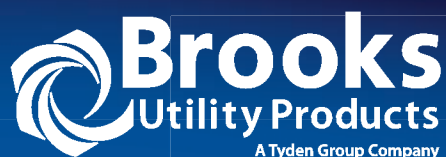
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WE ARE OUR OWN WORST ENEMIES.

BY FRANK SCALETTA

.....when it comes to being victims of fraud. Identity theft, and its' related crimes (credit card fraud, check fraud, etc), is the fastest growing crime in the US. Utilities are currently the number two victim behind internet sales. There has to be a reason or reasons why these people target our industry. I believe the answer is simple. We continue to draw great big bulls eyes on our foreheads. We are all fond of blaming everything from global warming to bird flu on deregulation. But let's all agree, that's where a lot of our current problems started. As utilities positioned themselves to garner more of the market, they all attempted to make it easier for customers. Face to face transactions became a thing of the past. A vast number of utilities closed their service center doors to customers, instead relying on phone centers and the internet. We started to accept credit card payments, to make it easier for the customer. We started to accept internet and email activation orders to make it easier for the customer. We reduced or dropped required deposits to make it easier for the customer. A funny thing happened however. We made it easier for the thief. Make no mistake about it, these people are thieves. They are no different than those who choose to steal by tampering with their meters.

Unfortunately we, in Revenue and Fraud Prevention, are at the mercy of customer service types. They simply do not, or refuse, to grasp the importance of fraud prevention. A study was done several years ago at a mid sized electric utility. They learned that they were losing more to fraud than they were to traditional utility theft. The relaxation of activation policies had led to an increase of fraudulent activities and a direct increase in bad debt writeoffs. They had closed their face to face service centers and relied on a phone center only approach. At the same time they relaxed their deposit requirements and began offering deposit installments, even on high risk customers! They relied on using one of the credit agencies for credit scoring. These credit agencies use names and social security numbers for verification purposes. The amount of returned credit hits in the category of "NO MATCH" quickly rose. This is the category used when a name and social security number combination do not match. With no option of using a face to face transaction, the utility did not have many options. They chose to impose a double deposit on the prospective customer even though the supplied information could not be verified. They then offered deposit installments on this double deposit!!! After a year long study, it was then determined that over 50% of these type accounts went to bad debts, some with not even the deposit installment being collected.

We have long relied on social security numbers for identification purposes. This even though they were never intended to be used for that purpose. In fact, my card, issued in 1964 says right at the bottom "FOR SOCIAL SECURITY AND TAX PURPOSES-NOT FOR IDENTIFICATION" It is simply a grouping of 9 numbers. For years we could tell what state the card was issued in by using the first three digits. No longer. Many agencies and businesses now do not use social security numbers, and in the near future it will be illegal to do so. What are we doing about it? Not much. For example, the Social Security Administration does not issue numbers beginning with "8". It never has. I recently queried our CIS for numbers beginning with "8". I found over 250 customers. How did they pass

the deposit query? It took me four days and the use of our contracted skip tracing provider to obtain correct SS#'s. I found over \$30,000.00 dollars worth of previously uncollected debts. If we had that many customers with numbers beginning with "8", imagine how many we had with fraudulent numbers. The SSA also does not issue numbers containing only one digit, i.e. 111-11-1111, etc. I found over 500 customers in our CIS with those type numbers entered. After asking customer service why our reps were inputting these numbers, I was told that "well something has to be entered" if the customer did not have or wished not to use their SS#!! The fact is, our CIS did not require a number be entered. It was mandatory only if the 1099 block was checked. We need to wean ourselves off the reliance to social security numbers NOW. I proposed that we use drivers license numbers. Here in Florida, our numbers contain the first letter of our last name, our year of birth, and our month and day of birth in code. It also contains whether the holder is male or female. All one has to have is the formula for validation. We have used it in our collections section with great success. Customer Service, however, is another story. They will not ask for drivers license numbers over the phone. Our face to face reps (yes we still have a service center) will however. When asked why we don't ask for DL numbers over the phone, I was told that most people know their SS#'s by heart, but their DL numbers. Of course, you can also make up a SS# which is unverifiable just by the number. It is much more difficult to make up a Florida DL number is the rep knows the formula. But heck, we have to make it easy for the customer. It is clear we need to be proactive at the activation level in order to prevent, or at least slow, the rising tide of identity theft.

When asked many years ago if we should begin to accept credit cards, my response was "Absolutely, positively NOT"!! Of course, to make it easier on the customer we began. I really don't need to get into specifics, because we all know the horrors of credit card fraud. Even with all the safeguards now in place (required billing ZIP verification, CVV number verification) credit card fraud continues to rise. Rising equally is check fraud over the internet. Think of now many checks you personally write and how many people see the information on the front of the check. Those who handle the check now have your name, address (including ZIP), routing number, and account number. In addition, they now have your phone number thanks to those who have put their phone numbers on their checks. You wouldn't believe the number of people who have taken jobs at check processing facilities only to mine information. This information is then sold to the highest bidder. We now see much more check fraud than credit card fraud.

How do we prevent these types of fraud? I believe the answer is education. It begins at the management level. Without their support, a proactive prevention program won't work. We must convince them that a solid, well thought out program, WILL work and be beneficial. It will save our good ratepayers millions of dollars. Once management is convinced, the rest will fall into place. Customer service reps should receive anti-fraud training during their initial employment initiation. Established reps should receive initial fraud training, and then all reps should receive annual refresher training. Than and only then can we even begin to combat the rising tide of utility fraud.

SARPA CHANGES ITS NAME

By RENS BINDEMAN (TECHNICAL ADVISOR)

Introduction

The year 2012 will go down in history as a very important year for SARPA and Revenue Protection practices in Africa. The decision to change the name from the South African Revenue Protection Associations to the Southern African Revenue Protection Association signals the start of a new era for SARPA and its members.



Rens Bindeman

The final proposal for the name change was accepted by the members present at the SARPA Convention in July 2012 in Drakenstein, after the newly established Namibian Branch made the proposal. In order to understand the positive consequences of this name change, we need to take a look at how this has come about and understand the other made efforts in the past to amalgamate Revenue Protection practices in Africa.

Historical overview

The proposal for the Association to be named the “Southern African Association” was first made by members at the inaugural meeting of SARPA back in 1997, as it would cover the whole region, rather than just one country. However, at the time it was the feeling of the majority of the members present that all the role players were from South Africa and therefore it should rather indicate the country of origin.

Over the past years this matter was raised several times at Executive meetings and it was subsequently decided to revisit the name change issue again in the future, should such a request be made by SARPA member utilities from outside the South African borders. In the meantime it was decided to assist the rest of Africa to start its own Association. During this period the African Revenue Protection Association (ARPA) was formed with the assistance of SARPA Executive members, but the fact that key role players and office bearers left their Utilities, prevented it from really taking off.

A new idea was proposed by which SARPA would assist Utilities in Africa to form separate Regional Associations for namely Western, Eastern and Northern Africa and then to later amalgamate them together with SARPA into the African Revenue Protection Association. This idea was however shelved, when it was determined that the Northern African Utilities showed no interest and the Western African Utilities indicated that because they predominantly speak French, they would not fit into the bigger picture of such an amalgamation of Associations.

Members of the Non Technical Loss Reduction Working Group of the Power Institute for Eastern and Southern Africa (PIESA) were then approached to determine if they would be

interested to rejuvenate ARPA or individually join SARPA. This request was however not accepted, as workgroup members proposed that PIEASA should rather become a member of SARPA. This issue has since been resolved by negotiating a “Cooperation Agreement” between the two Associations, whereby its operational members would actively take part in each others events and share knowledge and best practices.

However, Utility members from neighboring countries started attending SARPA Branch meetings close to their borders and some Utilities from other African countries even became SARPA members. The issue of a name change once again became the talking point at branch meetings, as Revenue Protection Managers pointed out that they have trouble in convincing their superiors to allow them to join an Association from another country.

Late last year a request was received from the Namibian Utilities at an AMEU Branch meeting that we should establish a SARPA Branch in Namibia. At the inaugural meeting of the branch on the 7 March 2012 (which consists of 4 Utilities in Namibia), the request was put forward that the name should be changed, in order for their Management to accept the forming of the branch. The SARPA President Mr. William Olivier then decided the time was right to address the issue again and the rest is history.

SARPA Convention 2012

The Drakenstein Municipality in Paarl hosted this event on the 12 to 13 July 2012 in Paarl. The Mayoress of Drakenstein Municipality Gesie van Deventer opened the event and stated that we need to work together in order to protect our revenue. We could then utilize these funds to build our communities and look after its needs. She also quoted that “Lawfulness comes from those who inspect and not those who expect”.

A well-known Economist Mr. Chris Hart, who highlighted the current international financial trends and the challenges facing the different countries and Utilities, did the keynote speech. The fact that International debt are increasing in relation to income growth is not seen as a good thing and it should be noted that if Utilities implement the right processes, they would be able to write off your debt. One should therefore determine “who could pay and who could not”

The international speaker Mr Itzick Michaeli from Israel Electric explained the problems they are encountering with new connections increasing to houses built without permits. He also highlighted the problems with regard to the lack of reinforcements for Revenue Protection units and the freezing of their Incentive program.

Several speakers highlighted the “lessons learned” worldwide with regard to smart metering and how technology can assist us to minimize revenue losses in the future. It was

SARPA CHANGES ITS NAME (CONTINUED)

pointed out that new technology can assist to achieve excellent service delivery, as it is all about “knowing your customers” and finding ways to integrating systems to achieve that purpose. Smart metering also brings about excellent debt management and reliable metering communication systems, which is very important in order to determine losses and identify problem areas. Another advantage is the option for changing over to pre-paid metering, in order to manage transgressors. It was generally agreed that “System security” is a very important issue, as it is vital to protect the Consumer and the Utility alike.

Several new gadgets which could assist with the meter auditing processes, theft detection and effective data management were shown by speakers who pointed out the importance of data assessment and financial profiling. It was made clear that one should summarize all the data available, in order for easy interpretation. Once this is available, it is easy to effectively identify and recover lost revenue.

It was repeatedly mentioned that we should unite in the fight against electricity theft.

Eskom, the largest utility in South Africa has taken the lead by launching a National campaign against electricity theft, compiled a “First responder guide” for their technicians / revenue protection operators and developed a “Guide to the Prosecution of electricity theft in South Africa” A new Website was also developed and launched where “whistleblowers” could make anonymous reports. The challenge was however still to get more role-players on board and also get all schools involved.

A section of the program was also dedicated to water loss reduction processes. The Department of Water Affairs played a big role in this session. The importance of Public Awareness Campaigns was explained, as well as the processes used to effectively manage through mentorship programs, as well as how to take ownership of processes and identify “champions” It was explained how one can work towards an engineering judgment, by analyzing all the data received. The new strategy to minimize losses was highlighted, which included public awareness initiatives, advanced metering systems, refurbishment processes and leak detection. The challenges facing the successful minimizing of theft and vandalism are clearly focused on how to get the buy in of all the role players and the retraining of personnel.

Overall the Convention was seen as a big success and everyone learned from the experience. Many affiliate members advertised their goods and had the chance to interact with the Utility members from all over Africa. It is proposed to hold the next Convention during July 2013 in Mosselbay. International speakers are most welcome to take part in the proceedings. Just visit our website at www.sarpa.co.za for more information.

THE CHALLENGES OF FRAUD

By KAREN SCOTT, UNITED ILLUMINATING

As the summer months approached, a utility fraud investigator had to face the challenges of the schemes misguided individuals would attempt after the winter protection season was over. Fighting fraud is not the easiest task; uncovering the facts vs fiction (outright story telling). Sometimes the attempts are just plain amusing and one must remain impartial while these individuals tell their stories (vs laughing out loud).



Karen Scott

You might be a fraud investigator if you have heard the following top 10:

I just moved in today (credit report shows otherwise),
I only had my mail going there (sister spilled the beans),
My id went through the wash (altered),
I never lived there (cell phone bill found on sidewalk),
Never had prior service (changed spelling of name),
I am not a dead person (death certificate sent in by family member),
That's not my spouse (but it was yesterday),
I am of legal age (now),
I have never known the prior tenant (grandmother),
And last but not least:
Address verification reflects “State Prison”.

The list goes on and on and we investigators have to make split decisions with these cases. Of course, there are other types of fraud to consider as well. Let's not forget the “catch me if you can” cases. The race of time as utilities are forced to work within time restraints of the billing and credit process (before the collection agencies step in) along with inclement weather clauses (too hot, too cold, snow storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc.) and all before the winter hardship season approaches once again. Whew, I don't know about you but by time November hits I have had my fill of all this game playing fun.

The stories are many and we can't help but try to keep our wits about us. At the end of the day, we really have accomplished much although it may not seem like it. Especially when there are the regulations that bind us but when you get that “real good case” that ends with satisfying means, you move on to the new case holding your head high (for at least 5 minutes). Those cases that resulted in criminal prosecution, property foreclosure, dissolution of fake/fraudulent business names /LLC's, and the money that was rightfully collected become monumental by us Revenue Protection Investigators everywhere (until at least next year). For now, the front line that was protected and held strong by the good guys will be the topic of discussion by the cheaters out there.

INVESTIGATORS

By ITZICK MICHAELI, REVENUE PROTECTION MANAGER, ISRAEL ELECTRIC CORP.

COURTESY OF ISRAEL ELECTRIC MAGAZINE

“To decipher an illegally electricity user’s file is somewhat like solving a detective riddle”.

An interview with Edna Cohen- Mazliakh and Riki Elgavish, electricity theft investigators in the Electric Corporation.

They do not generate electricity, they do not read meters, they do not connect customers to electricity, do not climb poles in order to renew or improve the grid, and yet, their job was recognized as a core supporting profession. Their job is unlike any other in the Electric Corporation, it is more like an investigating policeman’s. They are the illegal electricity usage investigators of the Electric Corporation.

Illegal users investigators are an important squad in the illegal use departments, and they exist in each of the service districts and regional offices. Formerly called “illegal user clerks”, and their historical task was to type the investigation requirements and to prepare data and calculations in preparation for a meeting with the customer suspected of electricity theft. In recent years the Marketing division and regional districts acted to expand their function, and they were trained to perform investigation of the customer, family connections – connections to find family members or businesses in which electricity theft might reasonably be discovered, and to negotiate with the customers until files are closed and revenues lost during the theft period are collected. The goal is to create a kind of “separation of authorities” between the processes of investigating and verification of theft in the field, and generating the calculation of invoice for the stolen power, negotiations with the customer, collection of the debt and disconnecting from electrical power in the event of non- payment. Due to the complexity and sensitivity of the job, training an illegal use investigator is very lengthy and professional. We met with two of them for a talk, and returned excited.

Edna Cohen- Mazliakh serves as illegal use investigator in the Carmiel service region. Edna was a Tel Aviv resident, but a family decision to move to the Galilee and find a job fitting her qualifications, brought her together with the region and the job.

What attracted you to take the job?

When I came to the North, this was a new occupation that did not exist in the company. I was attracted to join the establishment and development of a new and unconventional and non- routine area. The job does not only involve relations with the customer, but also includes technical, legal and being familiar with the area. All this added spice to my interest in the job. The encounter with the residents of the region, which is so different from the Tel Aviv population – is an interesting cultural experience.

What did your training include?

I arrived with professional training in education and professional experience in the area of single month consumption. I, together with all my colleagues in the North, took a long course in the Corporation’s school, where we learned concepts in electricity. Procedures, laws and regulations, questioning and interrogation, and identification of kinds of electrical power theft in connections and metering systems. There is one thing that cannot be learned in such a course: coping with people’s distress. This you learn “on the flesh” in the field.



Edna Cohen finds another use for Dani Boutzeck's - field investigator favorite tool.

What does your duty include?

In the department there is an investigator who operates in the field, investigates and verifies the suspicion of electrical power theft and verifies it, and brings his findings and evidence to the office. From that moment on, my job starts, which includes collecting technical and consumer data, meeting the customer, during which I make it clear to him his criminal and financial responsibility, and he, in turn, tells his story. Taking into account all the information that I have collected I decipher the incident and prepare an invoice for the customer. I also handle the complete process of collection – payment terms, follow- up, disconnection, and if the file goes to court - preparing the material for an external lawyer or the legal department, and also testifying in court. I attend every legal hearing. The element of deterrence is important.

What in your character helps you in fulfilling your duty?

First of all, a lot of patience for people. Being open to the human stories. Being loyal to decency and humanness. Good team work, seriousness and diligence – to decipher an electrical power theft case is a little like solving detectives riddles.

Are you at peace with the work you are doing?

I feel that the work I am doing is very important. This is a crossroads touching all the activities of the service region – commercial, meter reading and collection, planning, execution,

INVESTIGATORS (CONTINUED)

checking, warehouse and more. It is our target to return customers stealing power to the ring of normative payers, both from the human viewpoint as well as from the viewpoint of guarding the budgetary balance of the company.

Please tell us about an interesting story that happened to you

There are stories galore. We deal with capital office law. You need to use discretion in order not to reveal customer “glitches”. For example, recently a customer from a near by village came to me. He had served in the army and his sons are army officers. He is mentally injured from the Yom Kippur 1973 war period. An electricity theft contractor came to him and offered whatever he offered, collected a considerable fee and installed power theft at his home. The man felt shame, especially facing his sons. It was not easy.

And what about the future?

I wish that dealing with power theft will receive a better “recognition” in the company. True, it was defined as a core profession, but we still feel that we need to prove this is an important area from which a lot can be gained. It has the potential. Handling power theft and protecting company revenues – it is an area with a lot of room for development.

Riki Elgavish: I feel that I am playing the role of the “good cop”. Riki Elgavish is power theft investigator in the Netanya service region. She is married and has three children. At the IEC she has been working for 11 years, 8 of which in the power theft department in Netanya. Riki also finds time to study for Bachelor’s degree in social Sciences, with emphasis on Human Resources. She met with the job of power theft investigator when she moved from the 103 contact center where she worked to the Illegal Use of Electricity department, and was fascinated by its charm.

What attracted you in this job?

Actually, the job was created upon my arrival in the department. It was a new function. It is a different kind of work. It is a social issue. It is not simple to work with customers who performed an action on the edge of the criminal. The job requires a lot of sensitivity to the customer. I can testify that very often the customers arrive angry, aggravated and with a lot of claims, and in the end they nicely say thank you and good bye. There are even some who become friends and continue to call when they need an answer from the electric company. The job is challenging. To rehabilitate people is an great and important challenge.

Please in brief: how you find Illegal use of Electricity?

The team leader of the illegal use department, Lior Mizrahi and I are always at the disposal of the field personnel, i.e., meter readers, service personnel, etc. who have the potential for discovering power theft. During most of the day they have a response from the office, but we sometimes leave everything and travel to the site about which the worker reported. Sometimes customers come to my office wishing to report their suspicion of power theft by a neighbor or by a relative. They sit

in my office and explain to me how important it is that nobody will know that they “informed on” that person. I must create complete confidence in me.



Riki Elgavish & Lior Mizrahi - investigators

Does this job require a special character?

You need to have an approach to the customers. You must know when to show empathy even when there is someone before you who took something without paying for it. You need to know how to listen and be very sensitive. You must love people and to support them’ not to accuse them, to give them a chance. I always see every customer as a human being.

What are the difficulties in this job?

In most of the services that the company provides to its customers, the customers come to the company in order to receive the service. In our case, we “catch” the customers. We work vis-à-vis a not simple population. And yet, I feel that I perform the job the “good cop”. I understand that I am working with people, although they are problematic people.

What is most important for you in performing your job?

The biggest challenge is to make the customer understand that he is not paying a fine, but rather that he pays for electricity that he had already used. I do everything in order for him to feel that I am not a court of law. I patiently explain, I am emphatic with the customers. I do not know what made people do what they did, and therefore I do not judge them.

What satisfies you in your job?

Satisfaction in the end is when I reach understanding with the customers. When the customer understands and pays. And most important, when he becomes a “regular” customer who orderly pays his electricity bill.

I feel that I work at a place which is important for the company. We help by recovering a lot of money to the company and return customers to the ring of payers.

What about the future?

A year ago I received tenure. I come to work gladly, I wish this to continue. Of course, you look forward to be promoted in the future.

THEFT DETECTION AND WORKER SAFETY

By BOB HUCKEMEYER, CONSOLIDATED EDISON

Often times we take safety for granted when we are trying to identify theft of services conditions. Pulling live wires out of walls, remove unauthorized gas piping or just dealing with a couple of crack heads playing their radio with free juice, all dangerous life threatening work issues. All utilities have procedures in place to deal with normal inspection and repair of utility services and associated equipment. However, working on theft investigations confronts a completely different level of non-standard situations that may not have procedures in place. This is where common sense and proper planning need to be exercised. If we analyze each job and plan the work and work the plan, these dangerous daily conflicts could become a lot safer as long as we respect the energy. Some might say I'm a bit of an elitist. Well theft from associations like IURPA and WSUTA, and still learning from my co-workers, and the boss.

What do we mean by "Respect the Energy"? Working safely !!! Every job we go to has risk involved. Improper wiring may be the cause of an unmetered service condition but it could also be the cause for a flash, short circuit or explosion and ultimately injury to the customer and or the utility employee. As utility workers we are trained to work safely, regardless of the job function. We should never put the job at hand ahead of our own well-being. Personal Protective Equipment is provided by your utility company to help keep you safe. Rules and phrases such as where your

PPE at all times, test before working, work dead as alive. Simple but basic and should always be remembered before you start your job.

I had one employee working on a 7 jaw shunted socket meter equipment which was carrying a heavy load at the time of his visit. Because of the load the shunting device wouldn't release the meter from the sockets, it was also burnt out on one phase and the meter showed evidence of being damaged due to overheating, yet the customer still had service on all 3 phases. Instead of calling for help the brave employee decided to force the meter out of the meter equipment. By doing so he caused an arc and cross phase and subsequent explosion. He received first-degree burns on both his arms and face. He was not wearing a long sleeve shirt, nor was he wearing a face shield. He spent 6 weeks in the hospital and was unable to work for 6 months, all for the sake of getting the job done without properly planning and following the plan. This employee had 30 years of experience. Yet he thought he could get the meter out of the equipment without interrupting the customer's service.

Being too comfortable at your job is just as dangerous as being uncomfortable. Taking short cuts and not following the proper procedures for working on live equipment is dangerous and too high risk.

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patricia.uhlman@nstar.com



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