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Copper wire thefts strike Reed Rico BY MELISSA MCKEON MMCKEON@ HOLDENLANDMARK.COM

HOLDEN — Locks on the outer gates of the unoccupied Reed Rico building on Industrial Drive may have served notice to thieves that the empty buildings were protected, but they didn't prevent the theft of valuable copper wire from the property and may have prevented police from adequately patrolling the business to prevent such incidents.

That lock has been on the gates since the company moved the bulk of its business out of state.

Reed Rico consolidated its business at two other locations after downsizing its Holden location in 2004, which put some Holden residents out of work.

The property encompasses just over six acres and includes a 68,000-square-foot building, formerly used for light industrial. It is valued at about \$2.5 million, according to Town of Holden assessor's records.

While the building bears a for sale sign, Holden Growth Management Director Dennis Lipka said earlier this year that being owned by an out-of-state company meant there was little pressure to make leasing or selling the property a priority.

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- Definitely
- Yes, but not as much as before

Security checks by Reed Rico uncovered the thefts. A security officer reported them to police in August. He arrived for a periodic inspection to find not a broken lock and an open gate, but a new lock replacing the one to which he had keys or codes. He had the lock removed and replaced and inspected the property to discover that thieves had accessed the building through broken windows and, once inside, had used ladders, which had been left on the property, to remove copper wire from the building. Holden police say no other items were stolen from the vacant buildings.

Police say the stolen copper wire is worth several thousand dollars.

Copper material thefts have increased in the 21st Century since the increased demand for copper, linked to booming construction and expanding telecommunications markets, has been unable to keep pace with supply, fueling a cost increase that encouraged recycling - and theft for quick money. According to a U.S. Department of Energy study in 2007, the average price increased from about 70 cents per pound in 2003 to more than \$3 per pound in 2007. Metal recyclers frequently give cash for recycled copper wire and piping, which is also easy to steal. Vacant buildings present an easy target to thieves.

Locks have been removed from the gates to allow police to patrol the property, which they say has also been the site of petty vandalism. The whole building is now protected by burglar alarms, police said.

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