

A word from the UKRPA Chairman...

"Welcome to the third UKRPA Newsletter. This quarter, we throw a spotlight across the water, reflecting on challenges faced by Israel and Jamaica, and Mike Wilkinson (Vice Chair) extends the UKRPA hand of co-operation to present at the South African Revenue Protection Association convention in July. These international links are important to ensure that we fully understand the likely emergent themes that organised crime could mean for the UK – my experience as a boy scout (albeit many years ago!) suggests you can never be too prepared. The UKRPA is also stepping up another gear. The introduction of the first UKRPA seminar promises to be an exciting opportunity for those wishing to learn about energy theft, acting as a further forum to exchange knowledge and knowhow across different energy theft aspects. I would encourage early registration if you are interested (open to all, members and non members), as spaces for this free event will be hotly competed for and UKRPA members will naturally be given priority places. Perhaps this is a good point to mention that now is a good time to join the UKRPA and contribute to its work and enjoy the benefits."



Tony Thornton,
UKRPA Chairman



PHOENIX GAS THIEF GETS CUSTODIAL SENTENCE

Phoenix Natural Gas called at a property in Lisburn, County Antrim (Northern Ireland). Upon attending the site, it soon became apparent that the meter had been by-passed using a flexible water hose (image above).

Safety issues at the site were exacerbated by the fact that the regulator was not in use. The case was referred to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Substantial evidence provided by Phoenix Natural Gas helped ensure that a Romanos Obichodenko, an unauthorised tenant at the property, was charged with Criminal Damage with intent to endanger life and theft of gas.

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Mr Obichodenko was convicted on both counts at Craigavon Crown Court. Summing up, the Crown Court Judge stated that he had taken a serious view of the crime regarding the recklessness of the accused and the potential risk to persons and property.

Margaret Connor, Revenue Protection Manager and UKRPA Representative, said "We welcome the decision to impose a custodial sentence. Meter tampering is a serious threat to communities and all cases will be investigated, leading to police investigations and/or permanent isolation of supply. We will not compromise on the safety of the natural gas network".

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: 'You're Having a Giraffe'

Earlier this year BBC Northern Ireland Spotlight programme focused on Meter Cheaters and achieved some of the highest programme ratings of the season according to the BBC.

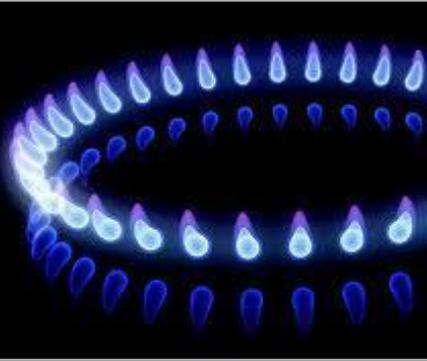
Police investigations are ongoing into the 'meter cheater' who famously said 'You're having a giraffe' when told by the presenter that he had been secretly filmed by the BBC tampering meters for as little as £30. The programme also featured UKRPA Executive Committee member Tom Doran who, after seeing the footage said "I couldn't live in a

house with that meter, if you are paying £30, you are actually saying 'that is the worth that I am putting on my life' and that is the frightening bit."

Tom (pictured) added "tampered meters are more likely to catch fire or electrocute anyone coming into contact with the meter."

NIE have recently seen an increase in enquiries and hits on their website following the screening of the BBC Northern Ireland Programme.





UKRPA UPDATES:

- Following the article in the last UKRPA newsletter and following subsequent discussions between a number of energy companies, the UKRPA and the Home Office, an agreement has been reached to establish a sub-group to look into ways in which energy theft related prosecutions can be improved. For more information, or to get involved, please contact the UKRPA Secretariat.
- The UKRPA has decided to respond to demand within the energy market for a UKRPA event in years when the UKRPA conference is not taking place. In 2013 the UKRPA will be putting on a one day industry seminar covering a range of topics. More information will be released in the next couple of weeks.
- The UKRPA is continuing to explore ways in which technology can transform the Revenue Protection landscape – if you are aware of any products or services that could be beneficial contact the UKRPA Secretariat.

GUEST AUTHOR
ITZICK MICHAELI,
 REVENUE
 PROTECTION
 MANAGER AT **ISRAEL
 ELECTRIC CORP.,**
 SPEAKS ABOUT
**CANNABIS
 CULTIVATION...**

Attending the IURPA (International Utilities Revenue Protection Association) conferences for nearly 12 years has made me fully aware of the "Grow House" phenomena and it's linkage to the electricity theft problem.

Whenever I presented the photos and videos of fully equipped grow houses, my audience was astonished, but most expressed beliefs that this issue would never reach Israel on a large scale. Even when I talked to police about grow houses, and offered to share my knowledge and collection of presentations, videos and written materials, I was courteously turned down.

Over the past three years, police observed an increasing number of grow houses in various parts of the country. Only then were our revenue protection officers sent to the premises to take a closer look. Nearly every site visit was successful.

I raised issues about the safety hazards regarding unsafe electric facilities and the presence of water and possible booby traps in the grow

houses with police chief investigators, clarifying the need for our RP investigator to be present during raids, in order to eliminate the electricity hazards, look for possible theft and record all the electric equipment present (vital for the calculation of stolen electricity used to grow the cannabis plants) – the police finally listened.

A few weeks ago, Tel-Aviv police officers and our Revenue Protection team, raided a central Tel-Aviv apartment and exposed a giant grow house. The investigation started when a woman filed a police complaint against her fiancé, who disappeared before marriage, after borrowing \$25,000 for investment in an international project.

The fiancé was arrested on suspicion of money invested in another project, that turned out to be a hydro cannabis grow house, in the heart of Tel-Aviv.



Tel Aviv Grow House

Investigators found that the man rented the house and turned it into a hydro grow house, on a scale not previously seen in the country.

Detectives were surprised that the man was able to establish an expensive special filtration system, for neutralising the unique, strong smell of marijuana.

The fiancé is suspected of illegally tampering with Israel Electric equipment, stealing electricity worth c. \$50,000. The suspect, aged 35, was arrested, and will probably spend a few years in jail, while his fiancée, will patiently wait for the return of the \$25,000 "International Project" loan.



Current Members:



REVENUE PROTECTION OVERSEAS

UKRPA Vice-Chair and npower Revenue Protection Manager Mike Wilkinson has been invited to present at the 17th annual South African Revenue Protection Association (SARPA) convention on the 11th and 12th July 2013 – the theme: “Effective Revenue Protection: a critical success factor for utilities”. This year’s convention provides a great opportunity for the UKRPA to talk about current developments within the UK energy industry, strengthening the link between the SARPA and the UKRPA.

ENERGY THEFT IS CRIPPLING THE JPSCo

The Jamaica Public Service Company (JSPCo) has recently expressed concerns that the prevalence and ferocity of energy theft in Jamaica is undermining the financial viability of the Jamaican electricity distributor. The JPS’ financial position is exacerbated by the fact that electricity theft triggered a \$30million fine from the Office of Utility Regulation (OUR).

Population: The JPS estimates that the number of households stealing electricity stands at around 150,000 – 200,000 against a backdrop of less than 600,000 customers. JPS also indicated that two state-owned sugar companies allowed neighbouring communities to steal more than \$100million worth of electricity.

Predicament: JPS’ CEO Kelly Tomblin advised that the issue was socio-economic and could therefore not be tackled by the JPS alone. She went on to state the goal that “100% of Jamaicans should have access to electricity, but everybody cannot afford electricity, so what is the stop gap?” She also cited community acceptance of theft as a major facilitating factor. The recent failed implementation of Residential Advanced Metering Infrastructure (RAMI) highlighted the fact that technological solutions alone were ineffective in combating the issue of electricity theft in Jamaica.

Progress: It is apparent that some progress is being made with 87 arrests for illegal electricity abstraction having been made since the start of the year. JPS have also outlined plans to disconnect illegal connections and put in place regularisation programmes for affected communities, as well the implementation of a pre-paid electricity programme.

UKRPA Membership

Full membership and affiliate membership is open to companies working in the revenue protection arena in and around the UK. For more information about benefits of membership please view our [website](#).

Administered by



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