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United Kingdom Revenue Protection Association

THEFT DETECTION
DEBT – DE-ENERGISED – DETECT

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The link between Debt Warrant and Revenue Protection

As we are aware there are different ways to detect theft of Gas and Electricity.

From our data, we analysed the link between a Debt Warrant execution, where the outcome was that the meter was de-energised, and meter being tampered. This is the quickest method to stop a customer from consuming more energy. The fuse is simply removed meaning the supply is no longer in use, this also means the customer will not incur more debt. This method is useful for ease to put the supply back on. It also stops assets being removed and replaced and reduces costs. The negative side to a simple de-energisation is that it is easy to illegally put the supply back on. Purchasing meter parts - fuses and tails are readily available online.

Field teams and agents making calls and visits are the main ways to identify tamper. 22% of customers re- energising is alarmingly high. If we look at the percentage, of the properties which were occupied at the point of de-energisation, over 20% of properties are more likely to tamper.

There is a clear connection to the debt collection path and the theft detection strategy. We need to use this information to identify theft and tamper.

The most common tamper technique discovered with a de-energisation is a substitute fuse replacement. This tamper can result in voltage overload where the fuse can melt and can ultimately lead to a fire hazard!

Based on our data over the last 6 months 22% of SME accounts, where the meter was De-energised at Debt Warrant, ends in meter tamper.

Copper wiring used to illegally re-energise meter

Pavement dug up to access live cable supply

Case Study

Outcome of the re visit from Debt Warrant de-energisation.

The property was closed when attending at Debt Warrant. This property was particularly difficult to gain access to, as the electric roller shutter mechanism was internally cased, so a specialist locksmith was required.

On entry it was identified that there was a tamper and the DNO was called. The DNO arrived within 2 hours. It assessed the tamper and deemed it as a CAT A.

The meter was located in the shop, in a concealed cupboard.

The fuses, which has been removed on the Debt Warrant, had been replaced with copper wiring to re-energise. The fuses were hot to the touch, and it was deemed a high Health & Safety threat. The DNO engineer removed the meter and tails. They then arranged for an additional third party to proceed to pot-end the supply. Two engineers arrived and dug up the pavement right outside the property. They cut the live supply cable and removed power from site. The site now has no electric supply or meter. The DNO put barriers around the hole and will come back to site to seal the hole on the pavement.

Case Study – Timeline of an account from initial visit to Pot-End

January – Debt visit. High debt account. Customer refused to pay and the property is still trading

February – Warrant executed due to debt balance - meter de-energised

March – Re visit de-energised site found. Customer back on supply - Potential tamper escalate to warrant

April – Revenue protection warrant - pot-end. The fuses have been replaced with copper wiring to re-energise. The fuses were hot at the touch and deemed high Health & Safety threat

May – Property is not trading and left empty

Further thoughts

After looking at the stats - should we remove the meter on site and seal the tails when the property is occupied when we execute a Debt Warrant to prevent potential tamper?

Should it be compulsory to re-visit site after de-energising or changing a meter?

Is it me or does it seem that Electricity and Gas safety inspections are no longer a process we actively complete on utility meters?

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