

Hoffman legislation takes aim at metal theft

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BELLEVILLE – With copper theft still a problem in the Metro East, State Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Swansea, is working to pool a group of experts to combat the crime that has indiscriminately targeted and caused property damage to local residents and businesses.

“Having worked with law enforcement officials, as well local residents who have been

victims of copper theft, I know more needs to be done to protect private property and public utilities from theft,” Hoffman said. “We need a broad approach to address this very real problem in the Metro East.”

According to insurancenews.net, record-high values of copper have helped to lead to an increase in thefts of the metal across the country, and the Metro East has not been immune, despite new laws intended to crack down on the transaction of scrap metal facilities. Copper thieves target telephone lines, power stations, air conditioning units, abandoned properties and construction sites. The crime can result in thousands of dollars in property damage and put public utilities in jeopardy, endangering area residents when power is shut off.

Hoffman introduced legislation, House Bill 330, creating a task force comprised of experts to help devise a wide-ranging plan to combat metal theft. If signed into law, the task force would include legislators, state and local law enforcement, and representatives from Illinois public utilities, rural electric cooperatives, insurance companies and scrap metal suppliers. Under Hoffman’s proposal, the task force would work to find ways to deter metal theft and strengthen existing laws.

Hoffman introduced similar legislation during the General Assembly’s previous session. The Bill passed the House unanimously but later failed to advance after it was dramatically altered in the Senate.

“Criminals committing copper theft are victimizing residents and local businesses alike,” Hoffman said. “This problem is not going to go away on its own. We need to come together to find an effective long-term solution before more damage is done.”

Hoffman represents Illinois’ 113th Representative District, which includes all or portions of Belleville, Brooklyn, Caseyville, Fairmont City, Fairview Heights, Granite City, Madison, Shiloh, Swansea, Venice and Washington Park.