



# ***PRESS RELEASE***

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** May 12, 2010  
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East Neighborhood Policing Center  
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### **Police Form Special Metal Thefts Unit**

RIVERSIDE, CA — On May 11, 2010, The Riverside Police Department formed a special unit to combat the growing problem with metal thefts. The unit comprised of police detectives from all four Neighborhood Policing Centers within the police department will target metal thieves especially those who have been stealing plumbing equipment such as irrigation backflow devices.

The Metal Thefts Unit will employ a variety of tactics, including compliance checks of known offenders, spot checks of scrap yards to ensure compliance with the laws that regulate them as well as a variety of proactive non-traditional measures to positively impact the problem with metal thefts.

Backflow devices are made of copper or brass, typically mounted above ground and are used to irrigate landscape while preventing contamination to a resident's domestic water source. The typical two-inch backflow valve is valued at approximately \$500.00 and to a resident having to pay to have a stolen one replaced the costs usually exceed \$1,000.00.

The problem with thefts of backflow devices is a national problem and influenced by the downturn in the economy causing many thieves to steal metal for scrap value or resale on the black market. There are measures that citizens and businesses can take to reduce the likelihood of being a victim of back flow theft.

- Enclose your backflow valve in a metal cage that is securely fastened to the ground and lock the cage with a quality lock.
- Position your backflow valve behind your perimeter fence if you have one so that it is not easily accessed.
- Paint your backflow valve with bright colored paint or conceal it by planting brush around it and paint it green.
- Post a sign stating something similar to: "Theft and damage to this unit will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."
- Stamp, label, etch or otherwise mark the metal with a recognizable code or name of your choosing.
- Place a surveillance camera or even a dummy camera in the area to deter a theft.

- Be active in your Neighborhood Watch or Business Watch programs and report suspicious activity to police.

Anyone with information related to thefts of metal or metal backflow devices is asked to report this information to Detective Melissa Brazil of the Riverside Police Department East NPC Investigations / Metal Thefts Unit at 951-351-6249 or by calling the Riverside Police Department's Dispatch center at 951-787-7911, callers can remain anonymous.

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