

OVERHEAD CABLES THEFT: Are you at risk? What can you do?

by [Gerhard Prinsloo](#) | Mar 6, 2026 | [Neighbourhood Watch, Newsletter](#)

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If your street has bare overhead copper cables, it is a prime target for cable thieves. Cable thieves normally act **between midnight and 4 AM**, with a team of 2 or more, and may be supported by a vehicle. Chances are better in winter, when it's colder (due to fewer pedestrians and dogs more often sleeping inside).

Are you at risk? Check what kind of conductors feed you on the poles in your street. *Bare overhead copper wires are a prime target for cable thieves.* Bundled conductors (designed to deter theft) are not.

Modus operandi for cable theft:

These thieves normally scout prior to attempting. Keep an eye open for unusual behaviour, people inspecting overheads during daylight.

A person climbs a street pole and cuts cables on both sides of the pole-top. The cables then fall to ground, where they are then cut off (head-high) at the next pole/s.

The cables are then pulled to a "safe" place (deserted street or open field preferred), rolled into coils and transported away (by car/bakkie, or summon a minibus taxi).

The climbing & cutting is very fast (all over in a maximum of 1-2 minutes). Bolt-cutters are used.

Common signs of cable theft:

1. Scouting: Be alert for scouting. Use your *radio* to call in suspicious persons taking an abnormal interest in poles and wires.
2. Be alert for signs of cable theft in progress:
 - Dogs barking & disturbed hareda's especially 00:00 -04:00.
 - Vehicle riding up & down your street very slowly or idling nearby.
 - If you have lights on, they may flicker/fail.
 - Sounds like Bang! Pop-pop! of a conductor, as it arcs and short-circuits to pole/conductors, trees or ground.
 - This may be followed by the Jangle/rustle of wire dragged away, over tar (in direction nearest bushes/veld). Makes a distinctive "slithering" sound, like a long spring.

What to do immediately:

Speed is everything. The longer you allow criminals to steal your powerlines, the worse the damage, so the longer you'll sit without power.

- Call loss of power immediately on your 2-way. *Immediate local response makes a huge impact. Others will hear, and arrive from near & far.*
- Be a good witness. Stand in a place you feel safe and shine a torch to light up the area. Try identify cars and suspects involved.
- Get active. SHOUT at the thieves. They must know you see them, and it's not OK.
- Press your panic button. Alarms say "Security coming now-now".

What can you do to prevent cable theft?

Respond immediately to upset in your street, especially between 00:00 and 04:00.

- If you have CCTV cameras covering the street, check them for movement.
- Look out on the street (safely). Try to identify what is causing the commotion.
- Report suspicious activity immediately by radio.
- If cable theft has occurred, share relevant footage with Crime@doringloof.net. It helps our Crime Intel group analyse the evidence and figure out ways for the community to combat it.

Whilst the on-duty coordinator will contact SAPS, Cable Theft unit and local Councillor, residents should report their own power outage in the normal manner.

-Team DNW