

Vandal attack on Switchgear covers.

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Approvals received:

United Utilities Asset Management has brought in a specialist engineering company to try to tackle the growing problem of unauthorised operation of High Voltage switchgear.

Over the years, large numbers of distribution substations have suffered from vandal attacks but more recently there has been a disturbing trend of electricity supply interruptions caused by professional burglars.

The burglars enter the substation and carry out unauthorised operation of the High Voltage switchgear to isolate supplies to the local area. This then leads to multiple burglaries being carried out under the cover of darkness amid the confusion of multiple security alarms being triggered and causes distress and inconvenience to both domestic and commercial consumers while creating potentially dangerous situations for system operatives.

The specialist company, Ashleigh Engineering Services, headed by ex-Distribution Engineer Reg Brown, is supplying maintenance-free, vandal-resistant stainless steel covers for the switchgear featuring concealed locking and spring-assisted opening.

Andy Fisher, maintenance strategy manager, commented: "Burglars are now becoming more determined in their efforts and on behalf of our customers we as a company must counteract this by investing in quality, specialist equipment to prevent them carrying out this unauthorised switching.

"We have already trialled installations at 25 high risk substation sites which have resulted in a significant reduction in unauthorised operations. Our policy now states that any unauthorised switchgear operation will result in the installation of vandal resistant covers to the switchgear," he added.