

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

February 4, 2025

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**SUBJECT: METAL THEFT UNIT UPDATE – AT&T TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLE THEFT**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of a trending crime that significantly impacts our community: the theft of telecommunications wire owned by AT&T. This crime disrupts vital communication services, affecting residents' safety and the operations of local businesses. Other companies, such as Charter Spectrum, have also been impacted by thieves who mistakenly target their cables, believing them to be AT&T wires.

In recent months, Fort Worth, along with cities across the nation, has experienced a dramatic rise in telecommunications wire theft. This trend not only imposes financial burdens on companies like AT&T but also threatens public safety by disrupting critical infrastructure. Thousands of residents have suffered service interruptions, impacting internet and telephone connectivity and creating vulnerabilities in emergency response, medical support, and everyday business operations.

Following the 88th Texas Legislature's strengthened law for theft of catalytic converter, thieves have increasingly turned to other regulated metals, particularly telecommunications cable mounted on utility poles. With millions of miles of this critical infrastructure spanning towns across the nation, the cables have become easy targets. The theft of telecommunications wire frequently results in prolonged service outages, disrupting 911 availability, flood control/weather warnings, medical devices, business operations, and virtually every facet of daily life for our residents.

Fort Worth Metal Theft Statistics:

In the past two years, Fort Worth has experienced a significant spike in metal theft. In a two-year comparison between October 29, 2020 - October 29, 2022, compared to October 30, 2022 - October 29, 2024, Fort Worth experienced a **545% increase** in reported AT&T cable theft and a **53% overall increase** in all metal theft.

The FWPD Metal Theft Unit (MTU) has taken the following steps to address this growing crime:

1. **Enforcement Efforts:** In 2024, Fort Worth Police Department has identified and arrested over 20 individuals for crimes involving metal theft.
2. **Increased Collaboration:** A collaborative workgroup has been established by Mayor Pro Tem Bivens and Officer Ben Wright with the focus being theft of AT&T cable.

The workgroup consists of Chief Neil Noakes, the Fort Worth Police Metal Theft Unit, AT&T executive management, representatives from the City of Fort Worth's Transportation and Public Works department, the Fort Worth Police PRO Team, and the Code Compliance department. This collaborative group is focused on sharing important information and ideas to combat the theft of critical infrastructure in the city.

The Fort Worth Police Metal Theft Unit is working closely with the Code Compliance Unit and Real Time Crime Center internally and other neighboring law enforcement agencies to identify and apprehend thieves.

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CABLE THEFT**

Officers from the Metal Theft Unit will participate in the inaugural Summit on Protecting Critical Communications Infrastructure, organized by leading industry associations, to explore actionable solutions for mitigating threats to communication infrastructure.

- 3. Inspections of Recycling Facilities:** Officers from the Metal Theft Unit have carried out numerous inspections at recycling facilities throughout the city to ensure adherence to state laws and local ordinances. During these inspections, the officers also provided education about telecommunication wire theft. This proactive approach has helped foster strong relationships with local business management, significantly contributing to the collective effort to combat metal theft.
- 4. Enhanced State Legislation:** The Metal Theft Unit is actively pursuing a range of legislative measures designed to combat the growing issue of metal theft. This initiative includes the introduction of new laws to strengthen legal frameworks, the implementation of stricter regulations to govern the metal recycling industry, and the establishment of more severe penalties for individuals who are repeat offenders. By taking these steps, the unit aims to create a more effective deterrent against metal theft and safeguard valuable resources within the community.
- 5. Public Awareness Campaigns:** Working with the Fort Worth Police Department's PRO Team to implement initiatives that educate the public on the implications of metal theft and promote the reporting of suspicious activities.

Attached are statistics related to metal theft, including thefts of AT&T cables, for your review. These statistics emphasize the seriousness of this rising crime trend, which is detrimental to communities in Fort Worth.

Your support in advancing these efforts is crucial for protecting Fort Worth's critical infrastructure and ensuring the safety and well-being of our city.

If you have any questions, please contact Sergeant Anthony White at (817) 392-4630 or Commander Randy Molina at (817) 392-4604.

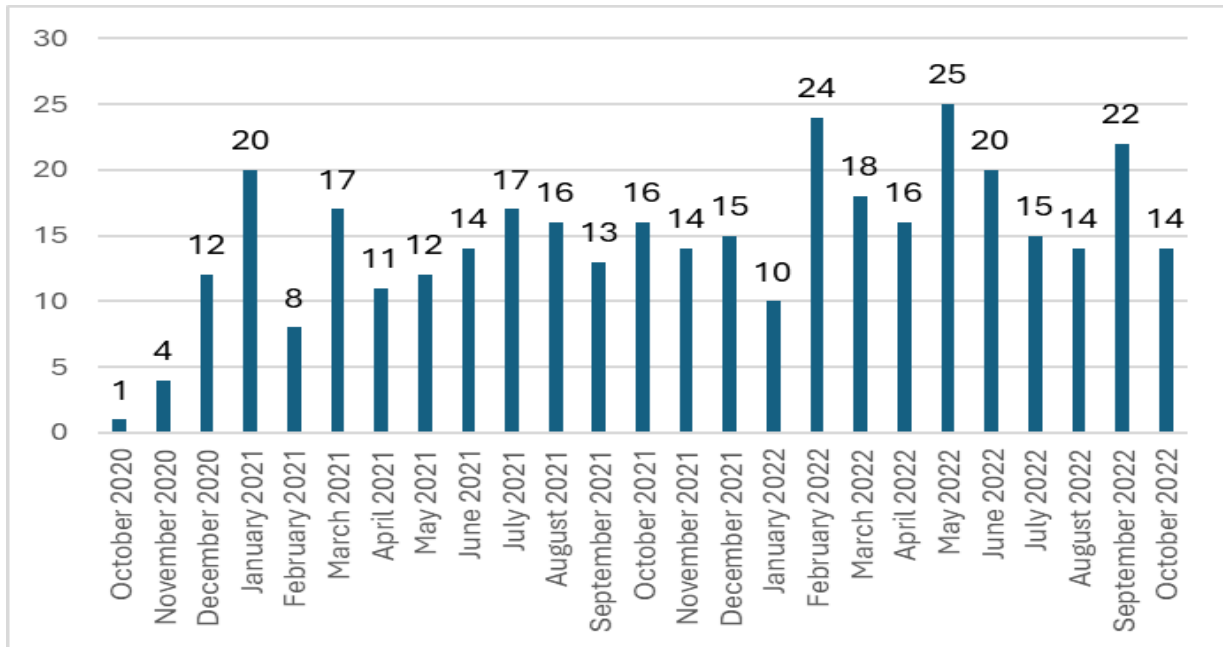
Jesus "Jay" Chapa
City Manager



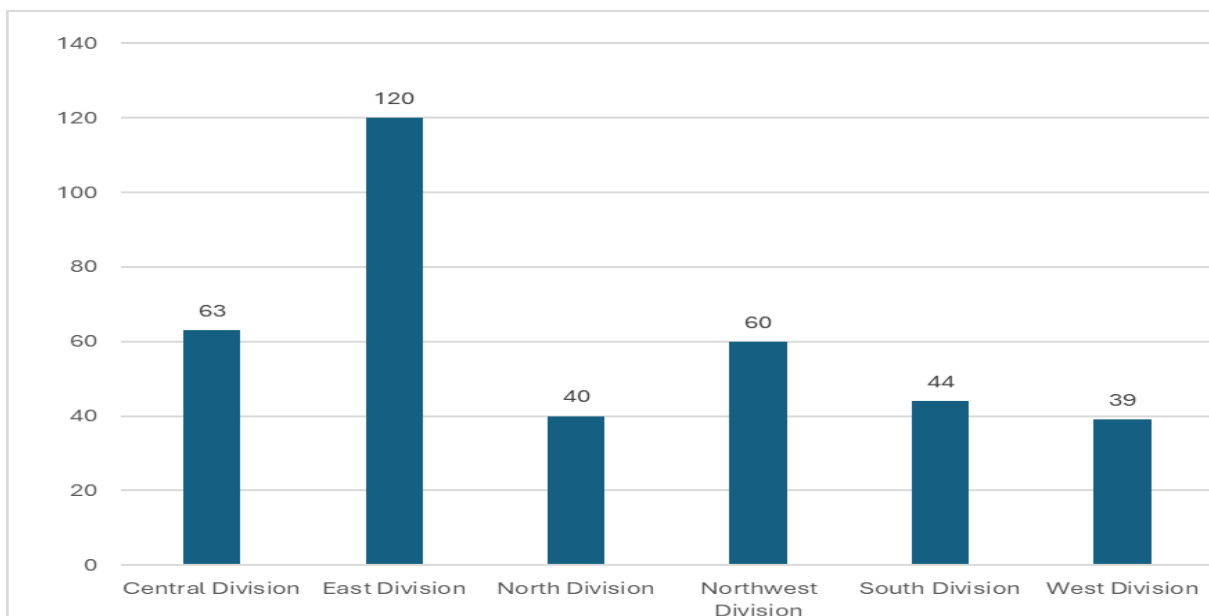
Appendix

October 29, 2020-October 29, 2022

368 Copper Thefts Unrelated to AT&T Cable Thefts



METAL THEFT REPORTS BY DIVISION

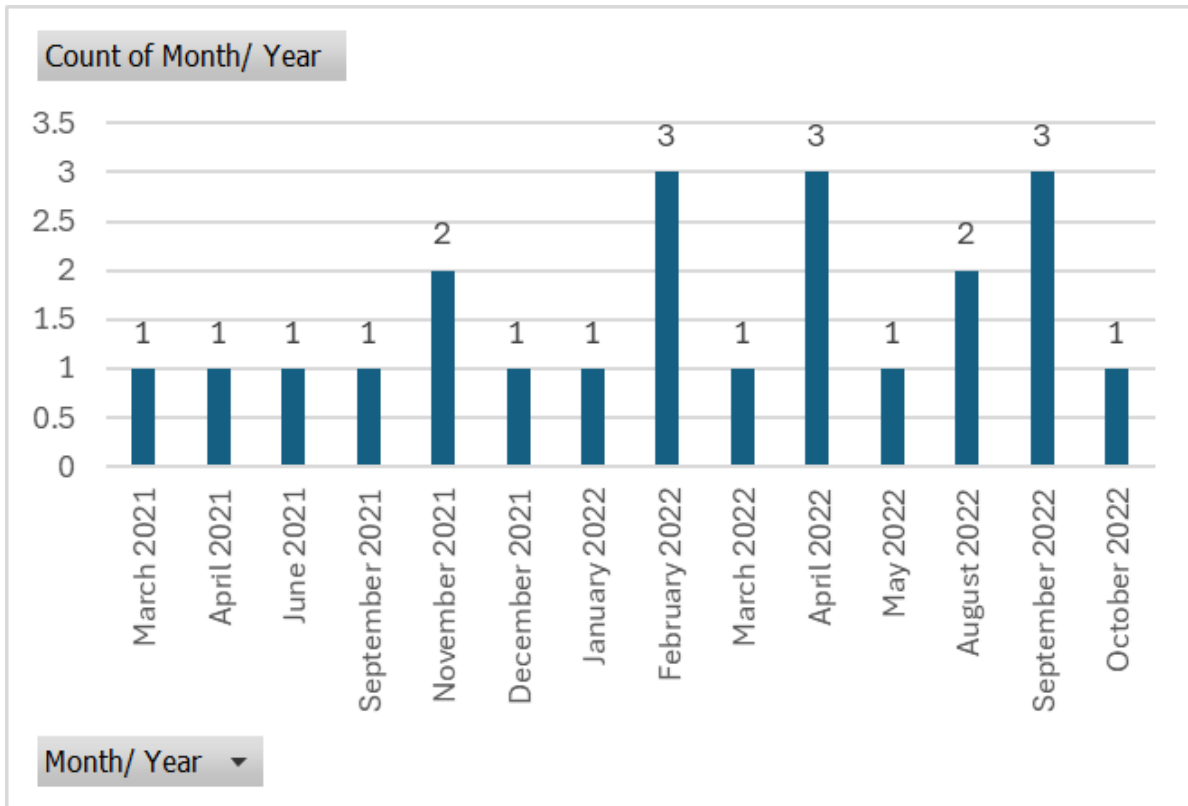




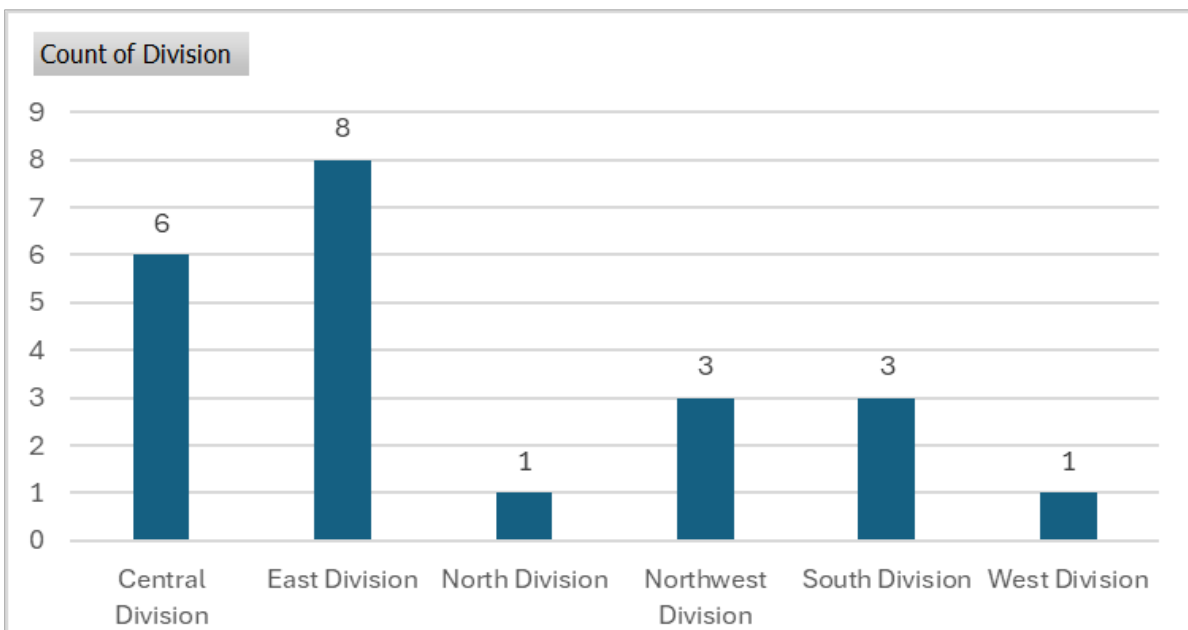
Appendix

October 29, 2020-October 29, 2022

22 Cases of AT&T Cable Thefts



AT&T CABLE THEFT REPORTS BY DIVISION

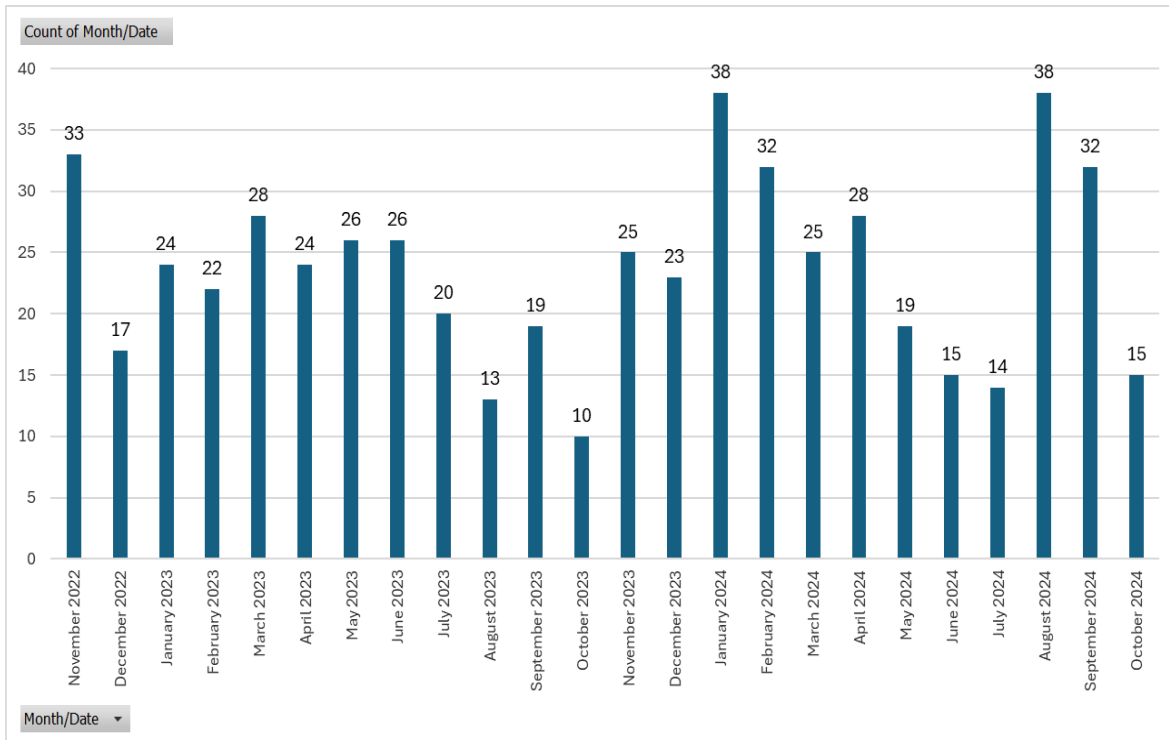




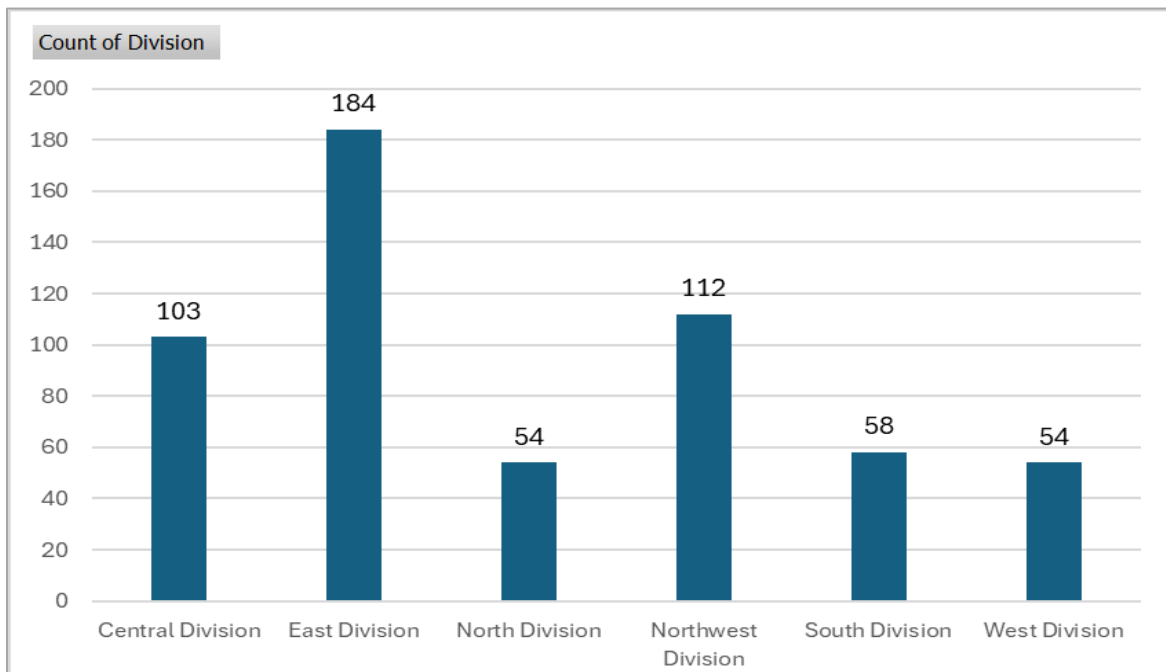
Appendix

October 30, 2022-October 29, 2024

566 Copper Thefts Unrelated to AT&T Cable Thefts



METAL THEFT REPORTS BY DIVISION

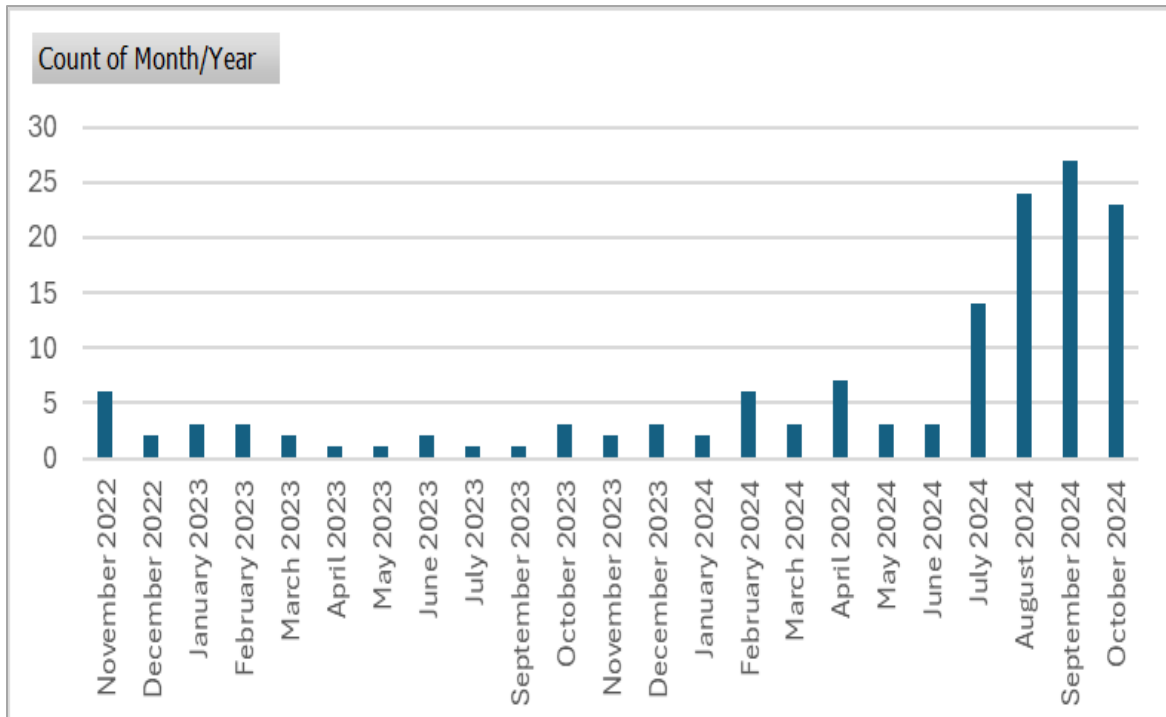




Appendix

October 30, 2022-October 29, 2024

142 Cases of AT&T Cable Thefts



AT&T CABLE THEFT REPORTS BY DIVISION

