

Law Enforcement Briefing

Water Theft

Following the Eaton Fire, Altadena and Kinneloa area water agencies have seen an increase in theft of water, primarily from publicly accessible fire hydrants. Common theft of water cases are construction water trucks filling up, private water trucks filling up or homeowners and/or their contractors connecting to hydrants to access water for home remediation and cleaning purposes. Aside from being a crime under California Penal Code sections 498, 624 and 625, this presents a serious threat to public health. Illegal connections to public water systems present serious cross contamination risks that may jeopardize the recovery of the water system and the safety of its potable water. Additionally, illegal hydrant tapping increases the risk for “water hammer” to occur and can break and create costly damage to our water system.

- California Penal Code section 498 prohibits the theft of utility services, including water;
- California Penal Code section 624 prohibits every person from willfully damaging, tampering with, or digging up water pipes or waterworks
- California Penal Code section 625 prohibits every person who, with intent to defraud or injure, opens or causes to be opened, or draws water from any disconnected utility connection after having been notified the same has been closed or shut for specific cause, by order of competent authority.



A legitimate temporary service connection to a fire hydrant is most obviously noted by the presence of a temporary hydrant meter. This meter will often be labeled as property of the water agency and be secured with a lock and chain.

A direct connection to the hydrant without a meter may only be made by the Fire Department. Any observation of a direct hose connection to a hydrant should be reasonable suspicion that a crime is occurring.

The Altadena and Kinneloa area public water agencies request that patrol deputies be informed of the increasing occurrence of water theft in our area and its immediate threat to public health and safety.

Any specific questions in regards to renting a "Ditch"/Hydrant meter may be directed to Rubio Cañon Land and Water Association via voice (626)-797-0509 or E-mail service@rclwa.org.