TRANSPORT Briefing

Rail cable theft delay minutes more than halved

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The number of cable theft incidents on the rail network more than halved in 2012-13 compared with the previous year.
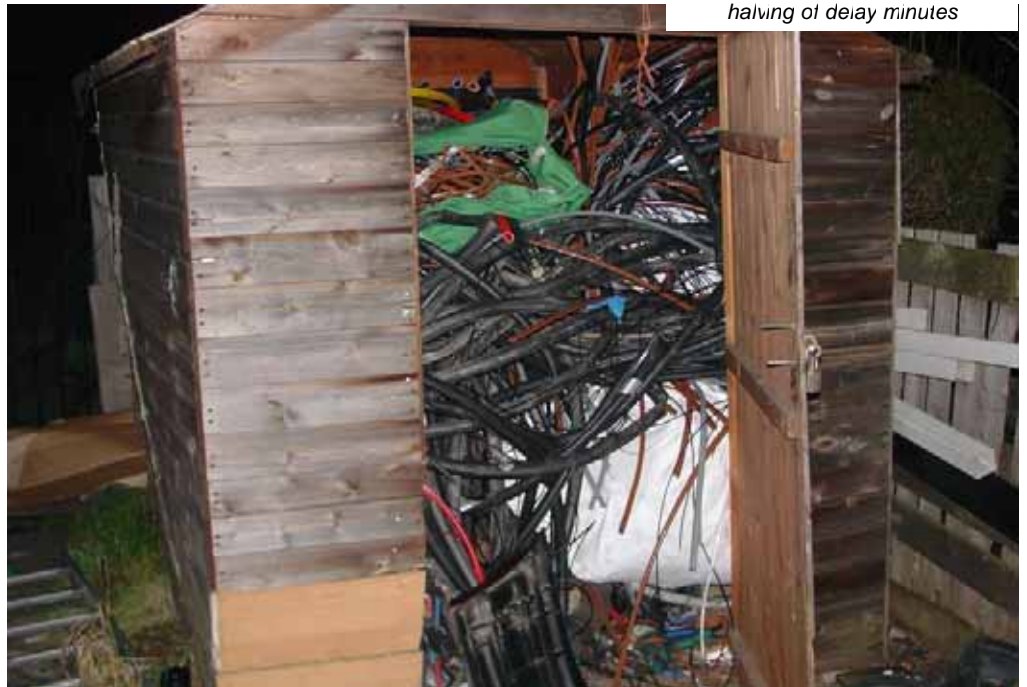
Figures released by Network Rail this week show that there were 285 incidents during the year causing 160,260 delay minutes with a total cost of £12.8m. The year before there had been 845 incidents causing 344,680 delay minutes at a total cost of £18.3m.

Neil Henry, head of operations and performance at Network Rail, said: "The improvements we have seen are down to a number of factors, including British Transport Police targeting thieves and the scrap dealers buying stolen metal. Our engineers are working with suppliers and other industries to make metal - particularly our cables - harder to steal and easier to identify and our teams around the network are introducing new ways of working to reduce delay and fix thefts more quickly. We believe the introduction of new laws following our work with other industries to explain the need for change to government will continue to help to stifle the market for stolen metal."

It is already illegal to sell scrap metal for cash; this legislation was introduced in December 2012. Network Rail supported the private member's bill introduced by MP Richard Ottaway to regulate scrap metal dealers. The bill was passed in February 2013 and the act will become enforceable as the Scrap Metal Dealer's Act in autumn 2013.

The Home Office is issuing guidance to councils, police, the legal services and all those involved with the implementation of the Act. A public national register of scrap metal dealers will be created to help ensure that sales of scrap metal are accounted for and that all people trading scrap are doing so legitimately.

Stolen cable: co-ordinated industry response has contributed to halving of delay minutes

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