

News

Metal theft is a water-tank size problem for district

BY CINDY WATSON

Record Gazette

Despite weighing about 3,000 pounds, would-be thieves tried last month to steal an old water tank from the Cabazon Water District.

In fact, water officials say, theft of metal has become a water-tank size problem for them.

The old Jensen water tank, which isn't used any more, is located on a hillside and is as many as 70 years old. It has a capacity of about 60,000 gallons of water.



Would-be thieves built this wooden "A" frame hoist to lift this 3,000-pound water tank at the Cabazon Water District in an effort to take it apart to sell for scrap.

Water district personnel first noticed that the old Jensen water tank had been tampered with on July 20.

Calvin Louie, general manager of the Cabazon Water District, said the would-be thieves had dug a trench around the old tank. When Louie returned to the site a few days later, he discovered that the thieves had lifted the 1 1/2 ton tank up using a makeshift wooden hoist and placed it on boulders.

Louie said it was before 7 a.m. on July 26 when, "district personnel discovered the tank had been raised by a makeshift "A" frame and supported by rocks."

In addition, officials found that several bolts had been removed from the tank, in an attempt to disassemble it.

The district reported the attempted theft to Riverside deputies.

The sheriff's office kept an eye on the tank until the district disassembled and stored it. They say the old tank has some historical significance.

Before being taken apart and stored by the district, the old Jensen "tank" had been near Elm Street, south

of Hattie Avenue in Cabazon.

The water district's R.D. Cash said that the old tank could have fetched the thieves about 25 cents per pound, or as much as \$800.

"It is a historic old tank," he said. Cash called the incident "a shame."

The Cabazon district does not know what it will do with the tank. Although officials believe the tank has some historical significance, it might wind up sold for scrap by the district.

After the attempted theft of the tank, Louie said he took a ride on horse back to check on old district piping. He discovered pieces of old metal pipe along a two-mile stretch were missing. He said the thieves also stole new pipe that the district had left in the area to be installed.

"We discovered numerous water pipes stored at the well and pump facility located at Adele Avenue and Lime Street were also missing; the padlock to the gate was cut," stated Louie. Cash said the stolen pipe is valued at about \$3,000. The district has had other theft problems as well.

Cash said several water meters have been taken. These meters are made of brass and can bring about \$2 per pound as scrap. "But they cost the district way more (than \$2 per pound)," Cash said. In fact the initial installation cost for the district is about \$100. Cash said the thieves will get about \$10 in scrap per meter.

The district's replacement cost is far more. It can run as high as \$2,500 when the meters are ripped out and damage pipes. The thefts will cost the entire district's customers money in the long run through higher rates. Metal theft is a serious problem for water districts and the Cabazon Water District says that people can report such thefts by calling, even anonymously, (951) 849-4442; or the sheriff at (951) 922-7100.

[Print this story](#)

[Email this story](#)