

Fuel Theft Warning - PRESS RELEASE - My apologies if you have received similar information earlier on in the week, I have been asked to circulate this message from our Press Officer.

West Mercia Police is urging residents that use oil to heat their properties to be extra vigilant following fuel thefts in the county. Hundreds of litres of heating oil were stolen from a local farm property near St Weonards, Hereford on Tuesday (11 January). Also 500 litres was stolen from Arrow Wood, Kington (12 January). A number of similar thefts have also occurred recently in Shropshire and Worcestershire.

Sgt David Bishop at Hereford Police Station said: "While this not a large problem, we have noticed a slight increase in such crimes in the county. It is possibly due to the increase in fuel costs over recent months so they may become more prevalent across the country. We are warning local people who use heating oil to take precautions against being targeted by thieves.

"Among other security tips, we recommend fitting an alarm which rings if the oil level suddenly drops or installing security lights to alert residents when there are intruders.

"Residents are also urged to keep any eye out for unusual activity or vehicles and report anything suspicious as soon as possible on 0300 333 3000, or ring Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111. Of course, if you see a theft in progress, call 999."

Sgt Bishop recommends the following hints and tips, which can help reduce the chances of heating oil being stolen from your property.

Plant shrubs or install fences to hide your tank from view. This is especially important if you live close to the road - although heating oil theft has also been known to occur at secluded properties with long drives.

Remember to check your tank's oil levels on a regular basis.

Where possible, install security lighting that covers your tank and the immediate surrounding area.

If your tank is openly accessible to all, consider re-siting it to an area or building where it is better protected.

Be extra vigilant of tankers or large vehicles close to your property. Note down any suspicious vehicles' registration numbers and report them to the police.

If your tank is located in an outbuilding, ensure it is kept locked and secured at all times.

Remove any empty containers or drums from the immediate area - they could draw attention to the presence of your oil tank.

Deter the thieves from entering your property by installing and using lockable gates and by maintaining boundaries and perimeter fencing.

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