

Dennis Security and Professional Services Newsletter

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Alarm system designed to stop copper thieves

Alarm dealer has firsthand experience after thieves tried to steal copper from company

BY SHERYL JEAN, STAFF WRITER

When someone tried to steal copper coils from Knight Security Systems' rooftop air conditioners last fall, CopperWatcher came to the rescue.

The small device, which ties into Knight's alarm system, detected that two power breakers had been turned off and activated a siren and strobe light. The would-be thief fled.

"The Monday morning power was out as opposed to having two \$12,000 units dismantled and broken," said Trey West, vice president of operations for Knight's Dallas office. "You never think you're going to be a target until you are."

Bob Frederick, owner of R.W. Frederick & Associates air-conditioning and heating service in Euless, invented the CopperWatcher alarm system a couple of years ago. After testing about 30 prototypes, he began marketing the patent-pending product about six months ago. The company has about 50 units installed.

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Armed at the Workplace?" KTRK-TV (Houston) (03/18/09); Abrahams, Tom

The Texas state Senate is considering a bill that would allow workers who hold a concealed handgun license to keep firearms in their vehicles while at work. The state House is considering an identical bill. The legislation is opposed by a group such as Texans for Gun Safety, which says that allowing workers to keep guns in their cars could result in more workplace shootings. "We feel that if a gun was available to someone who might have an altercation inside the workplace, that would give them such an opportunity to go in and show them how they feel in that particular moment, as opposed to if you had your gun at home," said Texans for Gun Safety's Tommie Garza. "You may take off in a rage, but by the time you got home, it would have given you time to cool off." Supporters of the legislation, however, say it would make gun owners feel safer while at work.

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Legislator moves to limit Google Maps because of terrorist threat

A California state legislator has submitted a bill that would limit the amount of detail allowed in images available from applications such as Google Maps and Google Earth, contending that terrorists are using such online tools to plot attacks.

Assemblyman Joel Anderson submitted Bill AB 255 to the California legislature on Feb. 11. The bill, which is waiting to go to committee, would not allow online mapping tools from companies such as Google Inc. to provide aerial or satellite images of schools, places of worship, government buildings and medical facilities unless they have been blurred.

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CopperWatcher models retail for \$380 and \$536, plus installation.

Similar systems exist, but CopperWatcher deters theft by monitoring the voltage and refrigerant pressure, and it's smart enough to avoid false alarms caused by widespread power outages. Tampering with it triggers an alarm.

Copper wiring, piping and flashing have disappeared from houses, construction sites and transformers as thieves took advantage of soaring copper prices in the past decade. Although copper thefts in Dallas have declined in the last year because of lower prices and stronger city ordinances, it still "creates a lot of havoc for people and a lot of damage," said Dallas police Sgt. Lance Hunter, supervisor of a unit that investigates metal thefts.

Frederick said he's talking to major retailers to install CopperWatcher on new construction.

CopperWatcher also is adaptable to swimming pool pumps and transformers he said.

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The bill is sponsored by two local state senators, Glenn Hegar of Katy and Dan Patrick of Houston.

It is a debate in Austin that could cause fireworks just about anywhere you go. Its Senate bill 730 and it changes where licensed gun owners can carry their weapons.

"I think it's a fantastic idea," said gun store owner Jim Pruett.

Pruett also offers the concealed handgun permit class, and he believes SB 730 is a step in the right direction.

"It's not anything to do with having a gun in the workplace," he said. "It's all about having a gun to protect yourself from the gangs, the common street thugs, carjackers and all of these other people that plague our society."

The bill states that a public or private employer may not prohibit an employee who holds a license to carry a concealed handgun in a locked, private owned motor vehicle in a parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area. That doesn't mean you can take a gun into work, just that you can have it in your locked car at work.

"We really don't feel that's a sensible idea," said Tommie Garza with Texans for Gun Safety.

Garza is believes the bill is a bad idea, even for responsible gun owners.

"We feel that if a gun was available to someone who might have an altercation inside the workplace, that would give them such an easy opportunity to go in and show them how they felt in that particular moment, as opposed to if you had your gun at home," she said. "You may take off in a rage, but by the time you got home, it would have given you time to cool off."

There is an identical bill in the state House. But of the seven stages, it takes for a bill to become law. Senate bill 730 is still on stage one, in committee hearings.

3 plead guilty to lax background checks of key federal workers (DC Examiner, 3/3/09)

A federal contractor has been sent to prison for two years and two of his colleagues are awaiting sentencing after they pleaded guilty to cutting corners on security-sensitive background checks for the federal government. George Abraham will spend the next 27 months behind bars in a federal prison after he admitted to lying to government officials about the background checks he was supposed to be conducting on several federal employees and contractors. He'll spend then three years under supervised release.

Special Agent Suzanne Weeks and Paul Higgins, another contractor, entered their own guilty pleas just a couple of hours after Abraham's sentencing. The three worked independently, but their cases were remarkably similar. They were paid to dig into the backgrounds of dozens of employees and contractors. Those employees and contractors had access to classified information, served in positions that affected national security and were often given high security clearance, court papers state. As part of their jobs, Abraham, Weeks and Higgins were supposed to interview potential employees' references and check records. Instead, the trio ignored interviews and documents for years, but told authorities that everything had checked out.

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They were caught after other federal workers made routine follow-up calls to the original references. When the references said they had never been interviewed, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's inspector general was called in. The inspector general, in turn, brought in the U.S. Attorney's Office.

"We take these cases very seriously because of the national security implications," prosecutor Ellen Chubin Epstein said.

Personnel Management spokesman Mike Orenstein told *The Examiner* that his agency was "pleased" with the outcomes of the three investigations.

"We believe these decisions will serve as a strong deterrent to those who are entrusted with serving the public good from participating in these or similar activities," Orenstein said.

Most of the employees who were given the incomplete background checks remain on the job, a source said.

Ways to Increase Internet Security for Little Ones

To increase your child's safety on the internet consider the following:

Set up the computer in a common room of the house, not in your child's room, so it's easier to see what is being viewed on the internet.

Keep access to your child's email account and randomly check it. Also monitor your child's chat room activity.

Instruct your child not to give out identifying information, such as home address, telephone number, or school name, and not to send personal pictures to people who area strangers.

Have your child show you what he or she knows how to do online as well as his or her favorite websites.

Teach your child to never respond to threatening or offensive emails or chat room messages.

Tell your child not to download anything from the internet without your approval.

Do an online search for "child friendly search engines" that your child can use when working on school projects.

Install filtering software on your computer to guard against adult content. Consider the white listing feature that allows your child only access to a pre-approved list of sites.

So everyone remembers type up the specific internet safety instructions you want your child to know and post them near the computer.

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Anderson told Anderson told *Computerworld* that he is looking to limit the amount of detail that Internet users can see. "We heard from terrorists involved in the Mumbai attacks last year that they used Google Maps to select their targets and get knowledge about their targets. Hamas has said they were using Google Maps to target children's schools," said Anderson. "What my bill does is limit the level of detail [[in Google Earth](#)]. It doesn't stop people from getting directions. We don't need to help bad people map their next target. What is the purpose of showing air ducts and elevator shafts? It does no good."

Elaine Filadelfo, a spokeswoman for Google, said they are hoping to have a sit down with Anderson and talk about his concerns.

"We are happy to speak with Assemblyman Anderson's office regarding this legislation and hope to have a productive conversation," she added. "Google Maps and Google Earth provide users with a rich, immersive experience, offering useful information and enabling greater understanding of a specific location or area."

Anderson said he's not against online mapping and has sat down with Google officials to talk about other issues in the past. "My door is open," he said, adding that he hopes Google will help him craft future drafts of the legislation.

"I'm not talking about blacking out locations but changing levels of detail," he noted. "Just because the knowledge is there, [it] doesn't mean the information is useful."

If passed, this bill would only affect California, but Anderson said he's confident that other states, as well as federal lawmakers, will introduce similar bills.

Plan Would Let Security Officers Write Some Tickets"
Chicago Tribune (03/20/09); Dardick, Hal; Rozas, Angela

Two Chicago aldermen have proposed a plan that would allow private security firms that patrol business districts in their wards to issue tickets for minor offenses, such as graffiti, littering, or parking violations. The two aldermen, who represent wards on Chicago's Far South Side, are discussing their plan with police and other city officials, and will soon ask the City Council for its approval. Mark Donahue, president of the Fraternal Order of Police, said he was unfamiliar with the plan but has reservations.

"We would be against it from the law-enforcement perspective, based upon the fact they're not trained law enforcement," he said. "From the taxpayers' point of view, I would be outraged that I wasn't getting sufficient police service and someone is going to pay private security personnel to perform [those services]."

U.S. Warns Truckers on Border

MARCH 27, 2009, 8:39 P.M. ET
AMERICAS NEWS
By CAM SIMPSON

WASHINGTON -- A government-funded intelligence group is warning U.S. trucking companies working in Mexico or near the border to establish special security procedures in light of the surge in drug-related violence along the key commercial corridor.

The Highway Information Sharing Analysis Center, which is financed by the Department of Homeland Security and run out of the Transportation Security Administration, issued an advisory on Friday warning drivers and trucking companies that they could be exposed to violence from Mexico's drug wars.

It was the latest indication of growing U.S. concern about potential ripples from a battle among drug gangs. Mexican narcotics barons, facing increased law-enforcement efforts to disrupt operations on both sides of the border, are warring over turf, including lucrative trafficking routes into the U.S. Some violence has spilled into Border States, including Arizona. Already, Mexican authorities have reported breaking up hijacking rings near the border.

"Truck drivers carry a risk as they are involved in operations that might interest these criminals," the warning said, adding that drivers should "maintain situational awareness at all times and be extremely conscious of your environment."

The center urged trucking companies to set up internal reporting procedures so their drivers can maintain regular contact while in risky areas. It also advised firms to establish special distress signals. Center director Don Rondeau said transportation-industry representatives had sought advice on how to protect drivers and trucks.

Surface transportation-based trade between the U.S. and Mexico totaled \$293 billion last year, up 2.3% from 2007, according to government data.

The Obama administration this week unveiled a plan aimed at stemming illicit Mexican drug shipments into the U.S., estimated to be worth at least \$15 billion annually, and limiting weapons and cash smuggled back into Mexico.

Violence has become especially pronounced in border towns that are crucial links between the U.S. and Mexico, such as Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana.

The State Department has also been warning tourists and business travelers for some time about potential dangers of visiting Mexico, saying it "is imperative that travelers understand the risks." Portions of that warning are incorporated in the trucking advisory.