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## **Protect Agriculture Equipment from Increasing Rash of Copper Thefts**

*Thefts can cripple equipment, production and businesses*

EAST LANSING – The **Michigan Agri-Business Association** today said Michigan farmers and agri-businesses must protect equipment that contain copper from the growing epidemic of copper thefts, which have struck homes and businesses in Michigan and elsewhere.

“Copper theft has reached epidemic proportions in many areas, and this crime threatens many businesses, including those in the agriculture sector,” MABA President **Jim Byrum** said. “Copper theft can damage equipment and cripple production, whether it’s an irrigation system or grain dryer, farmers and agri-businesses need to be aware that copper theft is a problem.”

Copper is found in many farm and agricultural implements, equipment, buildings and other assets, including grain dryers, irrigation systems, buildings and pumps, among others. Copper theft has grown into a nationwide problem, affecting farms across the country. An Arizona farmer lost up to \$40,000 because thieves stole copper from his irrigation system, leading to the destruction of his lemon crop. A Milwaukee business lost \$300,000 because thieves stripped electrical substations and electric poles of copper wiring.

Michigan farms have not been immune to the problem. In 2007, thieves stole hundreds of feet of copper from the electrical wiring of an irrigation system at a Sturgis farm. The theft caused more than \$5,000 in damage and idled the system for more than three weeks.

Copper prices have skyrocketed in recent years, jumping from 75 cents a pound in 2004 to more than \$3 per pound today.

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