A sharp rise in the theft of copper and other metals is occurring across the country, and parts of the Midwest have become a hub of this activity.

Illinois, Michigan and Ohio are among the 10 U.S. states generating the largest number of metal-theft claims, according to a recent study by the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

Ohio tops the list and is one of several states trying to tackle the problem with new legislation. SB 193, signed into law in June, requires scrap-metal dealers to take a photo of each person who sells an item to them.

Illinois HB 3825, sent to the governor in June, calls for new restrictions on what can be purchased by dealers and for factoring in the value of property damage when determining penalties for metal thieves.

Last year, Kansas (HB 2312) and Iowa (HF 299) were among the U.S. states to enact metal-theft laws. Kansas now requires dealers to pay for scrap metal by check or to photograph or videotape the seller. The Iowa bill allows for local ordinances that require dealers to keep identifying information on the seller. Under a measure signed into law in April (HF 2399), most scrap-metal transactions of $50 or more must be paid for by check or electronic transfer. For all sales, dealers would have to demand and receive a valid ID.
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