

## Meter tampering unfairly impacts businesses

Crimestoppers figures show that reports of energy theft have increased by **nearly half (48%)** since the start of the cost-of-living crisis. Motivations include businesses hoping to cut the price of energy bills or, for some companies, it's about not paying for what they have used in order to boost profits.

However, there is a safe way to address this issue as suspicions can be reported anonymously through the [Stay Energy Safe](#) reporting service.

Energy theft, which includes bypassing gas or electricity meters, poses an unjust threat to law-abiding businesses. It creates an environment that transfers the costs of revenue losses to other energy consumers.

### **Meter tampering can cause serious injury or death**

Tampering with meters, cables, wires or pipes also puts staff and unsuspecting customers in danger. It can lead to severe consequences, including explosions and fatal fires.

For example, in recent years, a Nottinghamshire pub was spared from catching fire. A painter working in the building noticed smoke around the meter, energy safety engineers responded and made the supply safe, without which it could have led to a deadly explosion or fire.

In another tragic example, meter tampering went unnoticed and led to the death of a business owner's employee. The owner tampered with the electricity meter to avoid paying bills, exposing employees and neighbours to dangerous conditions that resulted in a fatal electrocution. The owner was found guilty of manslaughter and fined £40,000.

These and other real life stories can be found [here](#).

### **Other consequences of the dangerous crime**

Energy theft is serious and extremely dangerous. Those found guilty can be jailed for up to 5 years. Fines start at around £2,000. Penalties can be much higher depending on the scale of the theft and the resulting damage or the risk to life and property posed by the theft.

### **Common signs of a tampered energy meter**

It's essential to be aware of the signs of meter tampering, to help safeguard legitimate businesses, their staff and contractors, workplaces and customers. Additionally, there could be cases where a landlord renting out a property to a business tampers with meters.

One common sign is when the meter isn't registering usage even whilst energy is being consumed, or where there is loose or unusual wiring or pipes. There can be a smell of gas or burning around the meter or even smoke or sparks.

Electricity theft can lead to shocks and severe burns as well as start fires, while gas theft can result in lethal leaks and catastrophic gas explosions. Read more about the dangers of meter tampering and how to spot it [here](#).

### **Report suspicions anonymously at Stay Energy Safe**

If you suspect meter tampering, you can report it while staying **100% anonymous**. Stay Energy Safe won't ask who you are, they'll just pass on what you know.

Contact **Stay Energy Safe** using our online reporting form [here](#), or, if you prefer to talk to someone, please call on **0800 023 2777**.

Stay Energy Safe is a service run by the independent charity **Crimestoppers**. They are independent of the police and ensure that suspicions can be reported anonymously.