

Protect Solar Panels from Thieves

Thefts of solar panels have become an increasing problem in rural areas. Here are tips to prevent such thefts, offered by the Napa County Sheriff's Office Problem Oriented Policing Program:

- Map the panels with serial numbers. That way, solar panel owners can tell which panels have been stolen. This will also allow law enforcement officers to prove that recovered property is stolen.
- Use locking bolts to secure solar panels, to make removal more difficult. Some owners have placed epoxy over the bolts so that the panels become even harder to remove. Other security methods include running aircraft wire through all the panels to secure them to the frame, or placing a weld that secures the panels to the frame or the bolts.
- Place tamper-evident stickers with the owner's name on all the panels. If the panels are stolen, the stickers will show the rightful owner.
- Use alarms on solar panels. There are several companies that install alarms that are specifically set up for solar panels.
- Use security cameras to cover your solar fields, so law enforcement officers can view suspects and possibly identify them. Some companies have systems with 24-hour monitoring, which can help to catch suspects in the act.
- Place a fence around the panel systems to make getting to the panels and removal of the panels harder for thieves.
- Contact law enforcement agencies immediately to report any suspicious people or vehicles. Provide descriptions of suspects and vehicles (including license plate numbers) to aid in the identification process.
- If you recognize suspicious behavior or you have become the victim of a crime, do not disturb the crime scene; that will ensure the integrity of any potential evidence.