

Thieves snag copper from USFS Tahoe sites

By Kathryn Reed

Copper thieves have hit the South Shore again; this time U.S. Forest Service structures.

USFS spokeswoman Cheva Heck told *Lake Tahoe News* the thieves caused “extensive damage in order to get to the copper.” She said it could cost as much as \$200,000 to make the repairs at the Kiva picnic area, Fallen Leaf Campground, and Pope and Baldwin beaches.

The goal is to repair the damage by Memorial Day – the normal time the seasonal areas open for the summer.



Damage done by copper thieves to a USFS bathroom on the South Shore.
Photo/USFS

The damage was discovered in the last several weeks.

Thieves this winter have also made off with copper pipes from Camp Concord, and Emerald Bay and D.L. Bliss state parks.

No one has been arrested in any of the heists and authorities have not identified any suspects.

The Forest Service is working with El Dorado County sheriff's detectives to track down the culprits.

The violations, which include damaging and removing government property, carry the standard criminal penalty of fines of up to \$5,000 and six months in jail for each charge. The Forest Service said it could also pursue civil penalties aimed at recovering the cost of repairing the facilities.

Some of the sites had been recently renovated. Non-copper plumbing will be used when the fixes are made.

The copper plumbing is targeted because the pipes can fetch cash at scrap metal yards that will buy it.

Anyone with information may anonymously call Secret Witness Program at (530) 541.6800 or USFS law enforcement at (530) 545.9853.