

## Detroiters are still hot about stolen AC units

Residents are upset air conditioners are taken to be sold for scrap metal, a summer trend in the U.S.

Orlandar Brand-Williams / The Detroit News



Steve Perez / The Detroit News

**A concrete platform is all that's left after thieves stole Dianne Schultz's 2-ton air conditioning unit at her home in Detroit.**

**DETROIT** -- Dianne Schultz is relieved that the sweltering and humid weather of July and early August has been replaced with milder temperatures. It's not because she'll save on her cooling bills, either. Schultz couldn't use her air conditioner on the hottest days of the year because her AC unit was stolen from her yard.

She wasn't alone. Schultz, a retired city of Detroit worker, was the latest victim of a rash of city thefts of the units for scrap metal, mimicking a trend across the country. Her townhouse was among nine others hit by bandits during the July heat wave in the upscale Ste. Anne's Gate condominiums near Lafayette and 17th Street.

"We're investigating each and every one of them," said James Tate, spokesman for the Detroit police.

Schultz said she thought it was just kids playing outside when she heard noises on the side of her home when thieves stole the 2-ton gray air conditioning unit from its concrete slab mooring.

She's still fuming.

"You have no idea," said Schultz of her anger toward the thieves.

"It would have been covered under warranty" had it happened earlier in the summer, she said.

Schultz says her homeowners insurance will cover most of the \$1,400 to replace the unit but she will have to shell out \$500 for her deductible on the claim.

Detroit's Noreen Alexander had her AC unit stolen in the morning from her Lappin Street home. Alexander, a 62-year-old social worker, was at home when she heard a thump and discovered her unit missing. She called police when she saw the unit outside a vacant house across from her home.

"I spent \$5,000 for a unit and you (the thieves) get \$100 for it," Alexander said. "Get real!"

Police recovered the unit, but it was damaged by the thieves when they tore it from its base. A local heating and cooling company heard about Alexander's plight on Channel 2 (WJBK-TV) and repaired it for free. It's not just a Detroit problem. Thefts of the units have been reported from Kansas to Ohio.

The AC units are coveted by thieves because of the increase in prices for scrap metal. Copper and aluminum material can get up to \$2 a pound at salvage yards and recycling centers.

"There's actually a couple of hundred feet of (copper) in an AC unit," said Jessica Forcier, whose family owns Zilka Heating & Cooling in Sylvan Lake.

Forcier was surprised to hear that someone would steal an AC unit, but she added that it's not hard to do.

"Literally, it could take less than 10 minutes to take if you have two people," Forcier said.