



**ALWAYS AWAKE.
ALWAYS ON GUARD.**

LotGuard

Preventing Vandalism
at EV Charging Stations
at Retail Stores

Preventing Vandalism at EV Charging Stations

Discover how retailers can deter vandalism at EV charging stations using smarter site security, better visibility, and rapid response to keep chargers operational.

EV charging stations are fast becoming part of retail store parking lots due to a growth in electric vehicle sales and increase in commercial use causing heightened demand for them.



However, whilst this development is useful for customers, employees, and suppliers, this has also created a target for them with vandalism.

Most will be aware of the repaired costs related to vandalism, but cost impact extends much further than this for retail stores who have them. From operational downtime and loss of revenue from an offline service to frustrated customers and reputational damage.

Within this article, we explore why EV charging stations are being hit and practical security steps you can take as retailers to protect them, your customers, and your business.

Why EV Charging Stations Are Becoming a New Vandalism Hotspot

With EV charging stations popping up across retail parking lots throughout the USA, and although this ensures customers, employees, and delivery drivers have somewhere to charge their vehicles, it also comes with its risks.

Their high-value components, exposed layouts, and often predictable quiet periods EV chargers are turning into vandalism hotspots, especially after hours. They provide quick wins for opportunistic vandals and thieves, with minimal risk of being caught.

We've broken down **6** of the main reasons why EV charging stations are becoming the new vandalism hotspots and why this is:

- ➔ **High-Value, Copper-Rich Cables**
- ➔ **Open, Public, 24/7 Parking Lot Access**
- ➔ **Nighttime Creates a 'Low-Risk- Vandalism window**
- ➔ **Rapid Charger Rollout is Overtaking Security Planning**
- ➔ **Easily Disabled Chargers, Both Expensive and Fragile**
- ➔ **Highly Visible EV Charging Stations**

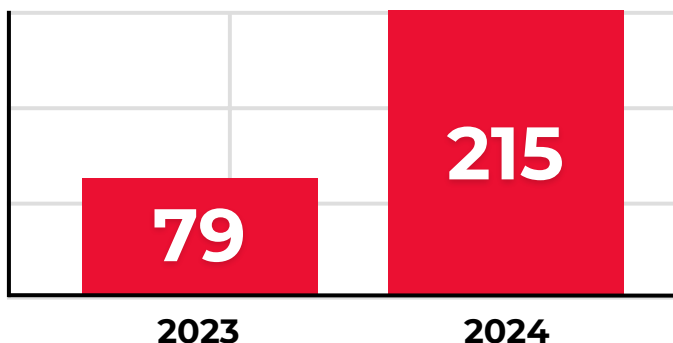
High-Value, Copper-Rich Cables

EV charging cables often contain copper to conduct the electricity to power vehicles, and with copper prices having risen 7.66% by the end of 2024, criminals are now seeing this as an opportunity to steal them for their own profit.

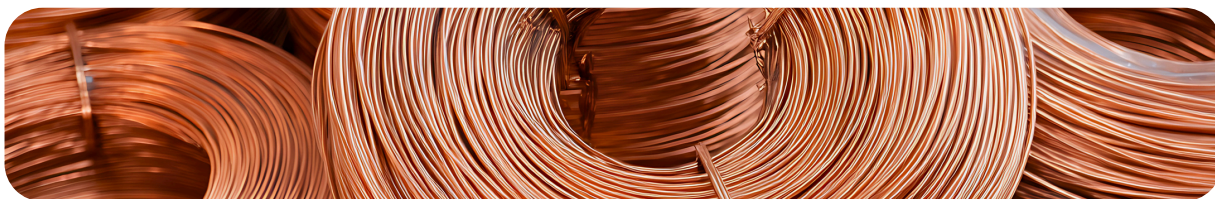
6.7%

Thieves are able to cut cables in seconds and sell the metal on as scraps, with essentially no traceability. This makes finding those involved difficult, and recovery of those materials even less likely.

In the US, major networks have reported sharp increases in copper theft, tied to cable cutting. Electrify America logged an estimated 215 company cords were cut in 2024, up from 79 in the year-earlier period.



This rise in price on copper has seen an increased interest from organized crime gangs (OCGs), who will look to target groups of EV charging stations and steal cables in bulk



Open, Public, 24/7 Parking Lot Access

Retail chargers generally sit on the perimeter parking rows, so that drivers can easily access them at all hours, but this also means that anyone can walk up to them with minimal chance of being stopped.

With predictable opening times, criminals will arrive after hours knowing there is little foot traffic and unlikely to have any security in place at the store.



Unlike in-store assets, EV stations sit in the most vulnerable locations of the property and this makes them extremely high-risk as targets.



Nighttime Creates a 'Low-Risk' Vandalism Window

As mentioned, nighttime brings quietness and low visibility, and these are both of great benefit to criminals. In fact, there are several issues that arise with retail parking lots:

- 1 Fewer staff onsite**
- 2 Minimal active patrols**
- 3 Lighting that covers aisles, but not charging bays**
- 4 Blind spots caused by vegetation, poles, and cameras**



Within this article, we explore why EV charging stations are being hit and practical security steps you can take as retailers to protect them, your customers, and your business.

Rapid Charger Rollout is Overtaking Security Planning

Due to a drive in electric vehicle sales, the demand for charging stations has grown, hence why many workplaces and retail stores have moved to roll them out quickly, but this has meant at times that security has fallen to the wayside.

When you rush the process, security will often be thought about once the charging stations are up-and-running, and at that point they're already being exposed to high-risk crime.

Simply, the more charging points, the more opportunities criminals have to test what they can get away with. The likelihood of yours becoming a target of this will only increase when there's no security in place.



Easily Disabled Chargers, Both Expensive and Fragile

One simple act of vandalism can take a charger offline immediately, and this downtime can create significant operational impact for retailers:

1

Repair and replacement costs

2

Electrician callouts and parts lead times

3

Bays blocked whilst equipment is down

4

Customer frustration and lost charging-driven visits

When criminals cut cables, this doesn't just represent stolen metal, but the wiping out of charger availability until repairs can be completed.

Highly Visible EV Charging Stations

EV charging stations attract more than just criminals looking to steal copper for scrap metal, their highly visible presence also increases the likelihood of other crimes:

- **Vandalism for attention**
- **Anti-EV sentiment in certain areas**
- **Opportunistic 'smash-and-grab' behavior**



For many retail stores implementing security, they'll focus on the risk of theft, but with EV charger crime growing, store and franchise managers need to start considering whether their systems are designed to manage the varying crime they're exposed to.

Collectively, these risks mean retailers can't just leave their EV charging stations unmonitored, because the real fallout of doing this can create some extremely expensive consequences.



What EV Charging Station Vandalism Costs Retail Stores

For retail stores, the visible damage caused to EV charging stations costs more than the visible damage created through such actions. Although most will think about the immediate repair or replacement costs of equipment, this is not the only concern managers should be keeping in mind.



From cut cables and smashed screens to damaged pedestals and graffitied bays can quickly add up to hundreds, if not thousands of dollars per unit.

For Level 2 cables, replacement costs can be as low as \$700, however, for fast chargers this can go up to as much as \$4,000 due to their technology and the need for a certified engineer to fit it.

\$700 ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ **\$4000**

What EV Charging Station Vandalism Costs Retail Stores

However, the bigger drain on retail stores comes afterward, when charging stations are simply sat there offline waiting for parts or crews to come fix them.

When downtime takes place it has double the impact: the lost charging revenue and the lost store revenue when drivers arriving are hoping to charge, but bays are out of service so they head elsewhere.

Charging is a big attraction for customers with electric vehicles, and often will pull them into shopping longer than normal by about 20 to 60 minutes. This means every outage slowly chips away at that extra time they potentially spend there, with repeat incidents threatening the ROI of assets over time.



Alongside these direct costs are also hidden ones which most retailers will often be unprepared for.



What EV Charging Station Vandalism Costs Retail Stores

If a retail store suffers from broken chargers, this can create a public reliability problem that results in negative reviews from customers and damages brand trust.



Vandalized or damaged equipment also introduces safety hazards like slips, trips, and falls. In turn, increasing the risk of liability claims, insurance premiums, and admin overheads. Essentially, one act of vandalism does more than just break equipment, but disrupts services, revenue, and reputation all at once.



To understand how best to prevent and manage these risks, it helps to look into the specifics that make some site locations more vulnerable to vandalism than others, beginning with the risk factors of retail store packing lots.

The Biggest Risk Factors at Retail Locations

Retail parking lots are some of the most complex site locations to protect due to their openness. Unlike other parking lot types, retail don't really have a choice but to provide complete access to the public, otherwise they risk losing customers.

EV charging stations will often sit at the edge of parking lots in designated areas, which are both highly visible and open to all members of the public, including criminals.

With long, quiet overnight periods, multiple blind spots, and predictable traffic flow, these factors make them safer, more attractive targets than the store itself. Below outlines the biggest risk drivers you'll typically find at retail packing lot locations:

Main Risk Factor	Why This Drives Vandalism at Retail Stores
Open public access 24/7	Retail lots offer easy, unrestricted access to chargers.
After hours low activity	After closing, low foot traffic gives vandals a long, uninterrupted opportunity.
High visibility of chargers	Chargers are visible, branded, and new - attracting thieves and vandals.

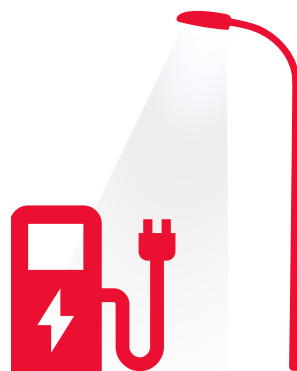
The Biggest Risk Factors at Retail Locations

Main Risk Factor	Why This Drives Vandalism at Retail Stores
Predictable placement of chargers	Chargers are often placed on lot edges, making them less visible from stores & roads.
Lighting gaps and shadows	Retail lighting isn't focused on chargers, making covert damage easier.
Fixed Camera blind spots / limited coverage	Retail CCTV often misses charger bays, which fall outside existing camera coverage.
High-value, easy-to-remove components	Copper cables are quick to cut and tempting to steal with low perceived risk.
Repetitive site routines	Predictable retail schedules make quiet, low-risk times easy to exploit.
Multiple exit routes	Large parking lots offer multiple access routes, enabling quick, low-risk escapes.
Limited on-site security presence	Without visible surveillance, chargers appear unmonitored and easy to target.

How Retail Operators Can Prevent EV Charging Station Vandalism

The most effective way to prevent EV charger vandalism is to minimize opportunity and increase criminal deterrence on-site. Retailers get the best results when they layer physical enhancements with visible security and fast response.

- **Improve Lighting**
- **Use Signage Throughout the Parking Lot**
- **Track Incidents to Identify Trends**
- **Ensure a Clear Reporting Process**
- **Integrate License Plate Recognition With Mobile Surveillance**



Improve Lighting

Most will not identify lighting as a crime prevention tool, but it's actually one of the fastest ways to cut risks at your parking lot.

Due to EV charging stations often sitting in dimly lit areas on the perimeter of parking lots, this increases their risk of being targeted by vandalism and theft. Therefore, by simply adding or adjusting fixtures to remove those hiding places and shadows directly around the bay, you'll be minimizing their likelihood of becoming a target.

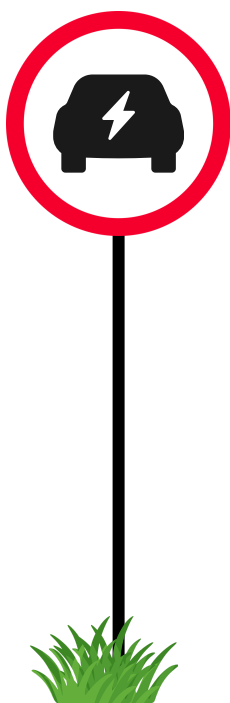


When choosing lighting for your EV charging stations though, most will pick the cheapest option, thinking that'll be enough to prevent crime, but there's several things you need to consider:

- 1 The layout of your charging stations**
- 2 The brightness required for that area**
- 3 Whether you have surveillance cameras covering that area**
- 4 Any elements that may create shadow under light still**

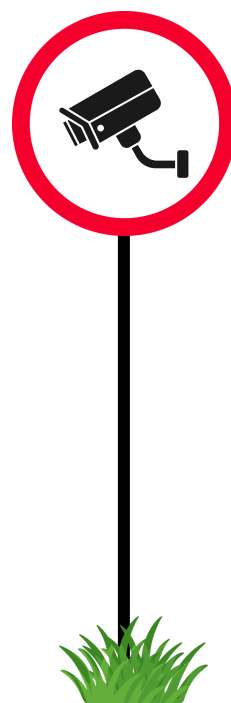
Use Signage Throughout the Parking Lot

Often most effective when paired with strong lighting, highly-visible signage can be placed near chargers stating that the area is monitored and that plates of vehicles are being recorded.



Most retailers will simply place signage near the entrances of stores to prevent actual store theft, however, this is exactly why criminals target areas like EV charging stations as they are less likely to be caught.

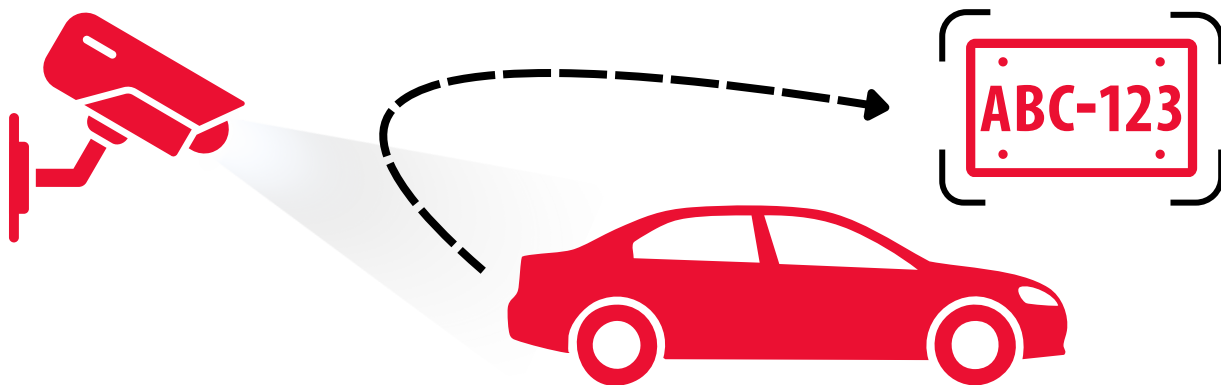
By informing them that they are being monitored, it reduces the chance of them being targeted by criminals as it makes them less appealing as a target. Criminals are looking for signs of security neglect, and signage indicates the complete opposite to this.



Track Incidents to Identify Trends

Incidents aren't random, especially vandalism, that's why it's important that you identify and track trends to ensure you're targeting threats correctly and using the best tools to do so.

You can track incidents manually, however, this can be time consuming and be at high-risk to human error. Therefore, to avoid this, we'd recommend investing in surveillance cameras, License Plate Recognition (LPR), and an integrated platform that brings this all together through automated reporting.



No manual logging required, advanced systems are able to identify threats, prevent or deescalate them, and then log a full report of this into one centralized platform. Including any registration information if applicable. This system can pull together incident reports from multiple sites, and from this you can identify repeat windows, high-risk locations, repeat tactics, and repeat offenders. From here, you can allocate your surveillance resources to those areas which most need it.

Ensure a Clear Reporting Process

One of the main reasons EV charging stations are appealing targets for vandalism and theft is that cables are easy-to-steal and get away with, meaning multiple can be taken at once.

Damage becomes costly when response is slow or unclear, so it's vital that you have a clear reporting process for everyone. From staff and delivery persons to customers and those simply charging their vehicles.

Any report needs to trigger a clear action plan:



Trigger Action Plan

- Verify the threat
- Secure threat if possible
- Call law enforcement for help
- Post-Incident Reporting:
 - Dispatching repairs
 - Gather surveillance footage
 - Update prevention tools



You could add QR codes or a phone number to charging stations that work to provide direction to those looking to report EV charging station vandalism, as well as other parking lot crimes.

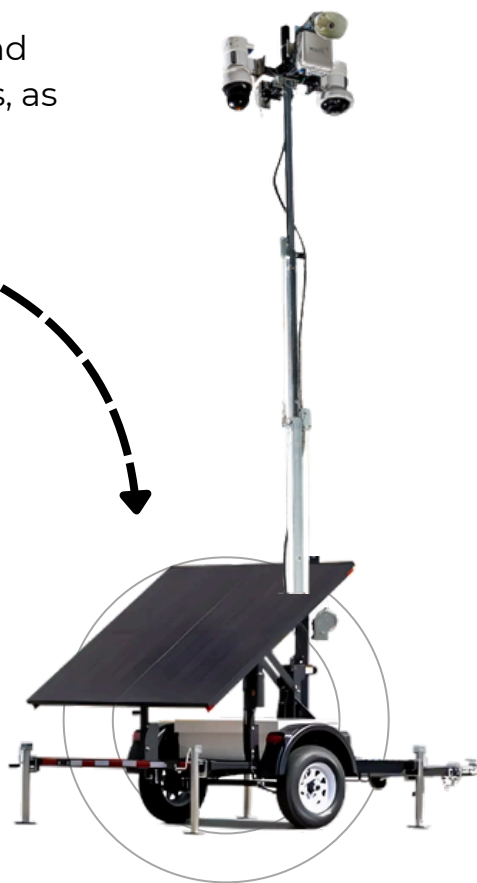
Integrate License Plate Recognition With Mobile Surveillance

License plate recognition raises the perceived risk for vandals whilst providing your store with usable evidence if an incident were to occur and it's needed for criminal investigation.

This is most effective when paired with mobile parking lot surveillance cameras and placed to capture both entrances and exits, as well as EV charging stations.

A Popular Option

Solar Surveillance Trailers are designed specifically for complex parking lot environments where threats can change and high-risk locations vary throughout the year. Standing up to 20-ft and fitted with advanced PTZ IR cameras that offer near-360 degree coverage, their portable design and power autonomy allows you to move them to your lot's needs.



Contact Us

Combining advanced surveillance technology, rapid deployment, and 24/7 remote monitoring, our parking lot security solutions not only deter crime today, but provide a scalable solution that adapts to your future security needs. Secure your site with LotGuard and give your customers, staff, and assets the protection they deserve by getting in touch today!

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