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New manhole material introduced to prevent theft

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BEIJING, March 13 (Xinhuanet) -- Beijing's utilities operators are testing a new kind of manhole cover to reduce rampant theft.

The new manhole covers will be made of non-metal materials with no recycling value, said Wang Xin, a spokesman for the city's utilities management department.

Beijing has more than 600,000 manhole covers across the city owned by 18 companies. In recent years, the city has seen widespread theft of manhole and street-drain covers, which end up in illegal metal dealers.

The city said that approximately 240,000 manhole and street-drain covers were stolen in Beijing in 2004.

A 30-kg manhole cover can sell for 20 yuan (2.4 US dollars) at scrap metal dealers, but it costs the government 1,200 to 1,500 yuan (145 to 182 US dollars) to replace each cover, Wang said.

The government has installed 2,921 new covers in greenbelts, sidewalks and non-motor lanes on a trial basis. "We are still looking for the perfect substitutes for the manhole covers," she said. Enditem

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