

Existing employees can cost you millions in losses and damaged reputation



The recent arrest of a security supervisor at Eskom's Tutuka Power Station in Mpumalanga has sent shockwaves through South Africa. This individual, implicated in a copper cable theft syndicate, is one of many suspects apprehended in a sophisticated operation infiltrating Eskom's management structure. This incident underscores the need for strict ongoing screening processes and lifestyle audits to safeguard organisations from internal threats.

The Hawks, South Africa's Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, arrested the 40-year-old security supervisor on March 5, 2025. This arrest followed a series of investigations in September 2024, when a vehicle loaded with copper cables was intercepted at the Kinross weighbridge. The investigation revealed a network of individuals, including Eskom employees, involved in the theft and illegal trade of copper cables.

The stolen copper cables, valued at millions of rands, were traced back to the Tutuka Power Station. The syndicate's operations included stripping and burning the cables to obscure their origin. The arrest of the security supervisor highlights a troubling reality. Individuals entrusted with safeguarding assets can sometimes exploit their positions for personal gain.

This incident is an obvious reminder of the importance of thorough employee screening during the hiring process and employment and the risk profiles of the individual positions need to be seriously considered to understand what screening is required to ensure employees possess the integrity required for their roles.

Risk Mitigation: Conducting background checks helps identify criminal records or criminal intentions

that may make a candidate unsuitable for a role, especially in critical positions such as security. A criminal record automatically disqualifies an individual from operating as a security officer in South Africa.

Safeguarding the Company's Reputation: Employees represent the organization. Employing individuals with questionable histories can harm the company's image and erode stakeholder confidence.

Ensuring Competence: Ensuring that candidates possess the necessary qualifications and experience through background verification guarantees their ability to perform their roles effectively.

Cultural Fit and Integrity: Screening candidates allows organisations to evaluate their alignment with company values, promoting a cohesive and productive workplace environment.

The Eskom copper cable theft scandal is a cautionary tale for organisations across all sectors. It highlights the vulnerabilities that can arise from inadequate employee screening and the devastating impact of internal corruption.

In a world where trust is a valuable commodity, rigorous ongoing screening is not just a procedural step—it's a strategic imperative. Let this incident be a wake-up call for businesses to prioritise integrity and vigilance in their hiring practices