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Alabama Radio Station Struggles to Resume Broadcasting After Thieves Steal Transmission Tower

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WJLX 101.5 in Walker County reported the incident on Feb. 2 after workers discovered the 200-foot transmission tower was missing.

WJLX 101.5 FM in Jasper, Alabama, hopes to resume broadcasting soon after brazen thieves allegedly made off with the station's 200-foot radio tower in early February.

"Unfortunately, the transmitter site was uninsured. We are currently working to rebuild, but being a small market station in Alabama, we have a large hill to climb," WJLX General Manager Brett Elmore wrote on Facebook.

Police are currently investigating after station workers discovered the radio tower missing from its rural transmission site, along with vandalism to a nearby building housing the AM transmitter, which was also stolen.

The theft of the 199-foot radio tower was reported on Feb. 2, although the exact date and time of the crime is not currently known, said Jasper Police Department spokeswoman Rachel Karr.

"We are working on every lead that comes in, but we are not at a point of publicly naming a suspect," Ms. Karr told The Epoch Times by email.

The motive for the vandalism and thefts remains unknown at this time.

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The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ordered the small classic hits radio station—"The Sound of Walker County"—to stop broadcasting due to the tower and transmitter disappearances.

"This has affected the operation of our AM, which needs a complete rebuild, and our FM, which is currently off the air," Mr. Elmore wrote.

In another Facebook post on Feb. 2, the WJLX executive announced the tower theft and vandalism after hearing of thieves in the area "stealing anything, but this one takes the cake."

"They stole every piece of equipment out of the building, cut the guy wires to the tower, and somehow managed to down a 200-foot tower and take it from the property," Mr. Elmore wrote.

He added that it is a federal crime to tamper with a federally licensed facility.

The estimated cost of a new transmitter, tower, and various equipment and engineering is around \$60,000, and maybe more, he said.

"We have received an overwhelming amount of support and tips from the community, as well as around the country. Many have asked, 'How can we help?'"

Mr. Elmore has set up a GoFundMe page (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/wjlx-1240-am-tower-and-equipment-replacement>), raising \$11,131 toward a \$60,000 goal to replace the equipment.

"In all my years of being in the business, around the business, everything like that, I have never seen anything like this," Mr. Elmore told The Guardian in the UK.

"You don't hear of a 200-foot tower being stolen."

In a text message, Mr. Elmore told The Epoch Times, "We are working on getting back on the air."

He was unavailable for additional comment.

The radio station began broadcasting in 1957 as WARF before changing hands multiple times and resuming operation as WJLX on Jan. 29, 2008.

Jasper's population is 14,352, according to the 2010 census.

WJLX wasn't the only radio station to have its radio tower toppled by thieves in 2024.

On Jan. 16, suspects in Hugo, Oklahoma, (population 5,310) in Choctaw County reportedly cut down radio station K95.5's 500-foot radio tower to remove its copper content.

Choctaw County Sheriff Terry Park wrote on Facebook that the estimated loss of copper was a "few hundred dollars," but the damage to the building and tower is around \$500,000.

"It appears at the moment suspects were stealing copper and cut the wires holding the tower up, bringing the tower to the ground," the sheriff wrote.

"We've got to go back to sending all these worthless crackheads to prison for a long time. Bury these worthless thieves in prison."