



News Release

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SERIAL ARSON SUSPECT ARRESTED

A Crawford County man is in custody facing wildland arson charges following his arrest by Georgia Forestry Commission law enforcement officers. Thirty-three year old Matthew DeFore is charged with six counts of arson of lands in connection with a series of fires in Crawford County that occurred between November 22 and November 29, 2015. Arson of Lands is a felony offense in Georgia, punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$50,000. Investigators started examining suspicious fires in the Lower Hartley Bridge area in May. Thirty-one arson fires have been set in the vicinity over the last six months.

"The suspect, Matthew DeFore, was arrested on Wednesday, December 2 and is currently being held in the Crawford County Jail. Bond has been set at \$50,000.," said Georgia Forestry Commission Chief of Law Enforcement, Brian Clavier. Georgia Forestry Commission personnel worked very closely with a number of partner agencies during the investigation, Clavier said, and added that the investigation into additional arson fires and crimes is continuing.

"The Georgia Forestry Commission is grateful for the invaluable assistance provided by the Crawford County Sheriff's Office and the Crawford County Fire Department during the investigation," Clavier said. "Georgians can be proud of the way these professionals work together to support law enforcement in our state."

Arson is the third leading cause of wildfires in Georgia and GFC forestry investigators have full arrest and enforcement authority in the state. They are specially trained to conduct wildland fire investigations and other forestry related crimes. An average of 700 arson fires which burn approximately 9,000 acres are recorded in Georgia annually.

Anyone who has additional information concerning the arson fires in Crawford County is asked to contact the Georgia Forestry Commission at 1-800-428-7337, GaTrees.org, or the Crawford County Sheriff's Office at (478) 836-3116.

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