

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



News Release

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AREA TIMBER THEFTS YIELD ARREST AND MORE INVESTIGATION

A Hephzibah man is in the Richmond County jail facing felony charges for timber theft. Ryan Casey Price, 23, was arrested after Georgia Forestry Commission investigators traced a trail of illegally cut trees to his home. Authorities believe Price stole timber on several nearby properties in Richmond County, then cut, split, and sold it as firewood. He is formally charged with theft of more than 100 tons of timber on one tract.

“Our agency was called in by the Hephzibah Police Department to assist after becoming aware of the thefts,” said Georgia Forestry Commission Law Enforcement Chief Brian Clavier. “Price has been charged with theft by taking and criminal damage to property, both felonies. He is also charged with criminal trespass, a misdemeanor.”

Clavier said an inspection conducted by the Georgia Forestry Commission determined 144 trees were cut down on one landowner’s property, with 140 of those being merchantable red oak species. The timber has an estimated value of \$2,700, with its value as firewood estimated at \$7,600.

“This is the first arrest related to firewood theft,” said Clavier, “and it apparently spanned several years. An investigation into additional thefts is continuing as more landowner victims and possible suspects are contacted.” Clavier said the value of timber stolen from the other landowners will be determined by stump cruises at later dates.

Georgia’s timber theft law was enacted in 2014. If convicted of these charges, Price could face a prison sentence of 10-15 years.

To learn more about reporting timber theft and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit GaTrees.org.

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