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Low 69°



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'A major problem'

Rise in copper prices leads to increased theft

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With the price of copper at a five-year high, theft of the precious metal has also spiked.

State legislators approved a new law earlier this year giving law enforcement an extra hand in tracking down the thieves of the often untraceable metal.

The metal brings top dollar at area salvage yards, and sellers can collect an average of \$2.50 per pound at at least one area salvage yard.

Houston County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Donald Valenza said the problem of copper thefts is not a new crime.

"It's been going on since the '70s," Valenza said. "Matter of fact, it led to the death of an auxiliary officer. A guy was stealing copper, the auxiliary officer attempted to stop him, and the man shot and killed him."

Dothan Police Sgt. Jim Holley, the supervisor of the department's property investigative division, said a copper theft is reported almost weekly to police.

"It's still definitely a major problem," Holley said. "It's grown this year more than I've ever seen it before."

According to Houston County District Attorney Doug Valeska the change in the law will help the state to prosecute the theft cases.

"We now have a means to go back and find them. It will help the police and sheriff's department make some cases," Valeska said. "The bottom line is there are too many victims losing property."

High dollar

Shaun Lokey, the general manager of Dothan Recycling Services, said they regularly buy copper from as many as 30 to 40 people per day. Lokey said the price of copper has been at a peak for about a year.

"Right now, copper is the hot item," Lokey said. "Copper is a valuable resource right now — think of the housing boom and all the wiring they need."

Mark Everett, who owns Everett Construction Co. Inc. out of Dothan with his brother, said it's that popular market that has left him at a loss of more than \$3,000 after two recent thefts. Everett said the new law could deter some thieves from stealing copper.

"It's kind of like somebody smashing somebody's car window in order to get a \$10 wallet," Everett said. "It's not necessarily the loss of the wire which can hurt, but it's the labor that goes into the replacing it."

Vivian Ard, the owner of Ard Plumbing in Wicksburg, reported more than \$2,000 worth of copper wiring and piping stolen from their main office as recently as last week. Some thieves

See **COPPER, 8A**



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Shaun Lokey of Dothan Recycling Services stands by tons of scrap copper purchased by his company that will be shipped out to be recycled into new products. Copper theft has been a growing problem nationwide as prices have increased several times.

State law

According to state law under House Bill 94 Act 451 as of Sept. 1, a recycling business is required to:

- Maintain a record of purchase transactions which includes the date, weight and type of metal in the purchase.
- A signed statement from the seller stating they are the rightful owner of the metal.
- Name and address of the seller.
- Type of vehicle and license place number of the vehicle delivering the metal.
- No cash payments of more than \$100 in copper or \$1,000 for all other metals.

■ Payment shall be made by check for any other purchases worth more than \$100 in copper.

Penalties include:

- Faces a Class A misdemeanor if caught selling less than \$250 worth of stolen copper.
- A Class A misdemeanor conviction holds up to a one year jail term, and not more than a \$2,000 fine.
- Faces a Class C felony if caught selling more than \$250 worth of stolen copper
- A Class C felony holds punishment of a year and day up to 10 years and up to a \$5,000 fine.

Thirsty cop nabs murder suspect

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A Dothan police officer who had stopped to buy a drink at a convenience store likely didn't think it would result in the arrest of a capital murder suspect.

Maurice Eggleston, a Dothan patrol officer, was on his way to work on Wednesday morning when he spotted 27-year-old Andre Oshawn Farrier sitting inside of a vehicle in the parking lot of a Shell Food Store.



Andre Farrier

Police filed capital murder charges against Farrier on Tuesday morning. Farrier, of South Pontiac Avenue, became the third person jailed on capital murder charges in the shooting death of Richard Smith.

Farrier was arrested around 6 a.m. at the convenience store, located near the intersection of East Main Street and Ross Clark Circle, according to police Lt. David Jay.

"(Eggleston was) on duty the day before and knew we were looking for (Farrier)," Jay said.

See **SUSPECT, 2A**

General discusses future of UAS

Army's vice chief says Fort Rucker key to program's success

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FORT RUCKER — While the Army's vice chief of staff said this post is on the cusp of seeing significant training with Unmanned Aerial Systems, some of what will be trained is already taking place on the battlefield.

During a press conference with local media on Wednesday, Gen. Richard Cody said Fort Rucker should play an important part in determining how UASs are used in tandem with manned units. Then, he said, Fort Rucker will train the two units together.

Cody said the two units are already being used together with the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, which recently returned from Iraq. He said the Army wants to integrate the two units further, allowing the unmanned vehicles to do the type of reconnaissance that manned Kiowa Warriors or Apaches have done.

"We're already learning from the 25th," Cody said. "We're using the UASs for route reconnaissance to map out ground maneuvers, and we don't have to put Warriors or Apaches up. We're using them to find (Improvised Explosive Devices) and where they're being made."

See **UAS, 2A**



Gen. Richard Cody

Fortner Street development gains approval

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Laver Hills resident Johnnie Gallman is opposed to plans for another subdivision along Fortner Street. She has lived off Fortner for four-and-a-half years and is concerned that more development will further tax the area's infrastructure.

Also, she thinks a proposed new development there is not compatible with existing subdivisions. Dothan City planners agreed, and recommended a rezoning request be denied.

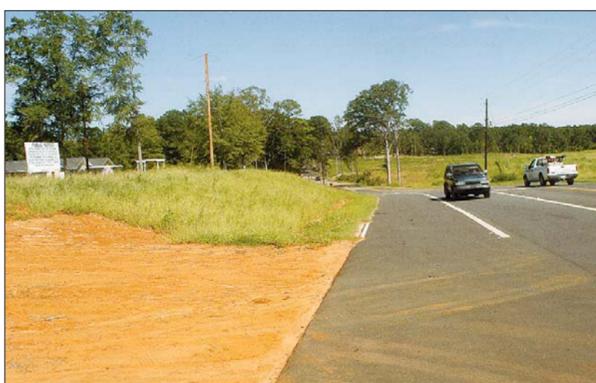
"It is completely incompatible with the surrounding area," Gallman told planning commissioners Wednesday. "You've got all these subdivisions out there. Fortner has

had some unrestrained growth. You are letting it grow uncontrolled. We are overshooting our infrastructure."

The development, Halcyon Subdivision, is located on an 81.9-acre site on the north side of the 4300 block of Fortner. The property, which was recommended for rezoning from agricultural to TH-24, is owned by CWS, LLC (Charles Chapman, John Watson and Alfred Saliba). It is west of a 157-acre parcel also owned by CWS, which was considered as a potential site for a new park. Residents opposed that development as well.

Halcyon Subdivision is a garden home development similar to Crestwood Village, according to Philip Santora with Northstar Engineering.

See **FORTNER, 7A**



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A preliminary plat for the new Halcyon subdivision in the 4300 block of Fortner Street was approved Thursday by the planning commission pending city commission rezoning. Garden homes are slated for the site.



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