



# INSURANCE AND SAFETY FIRE COMMISSIONER

- State of Georgia -

## *NEWS RELEASE*

**John F. King**

Commissioner of Insurance  
Safety Fire Commissioner  
Industrial Loan Commissioner  
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For Immediate Release  
October 29, 2019

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### **SERIAL ARSONIST ARRESTED IN TURNER COUNTY**

**ATLANTA** – On Monday, October 28, Willie Fred Poke, 37, of Ashburn, Georgia, was arrested and charged with 3 counts of Arson in the First Degree, 2 Counts of Burglary in the First Degree, 3 counts of Criminal Trespass, and 4 counts of Aggravated Assault, all of which are felonies. The charges stem from his alleged involvement in setting three Turner County fires that occurred from September 29 to October 25. Poke currently sits in Turner County Jail awaiting a bond hearing.



The first fire occurred around 2:30 A.M. on the morning of September 29 at 405 South Main Street in Ashburn, Georgia. The 2,016 square-foot, 119-year-old structure was unoccupied at the time of the fire and suffered major damage. The second fire occurred around 3:20 A.M. on the morning of October 14 at 404 South Gordon Street in Ashburn, Georgia. The fire was set to a storage building which then spread to a nearby occupied structure resulting in the 4 counts of Aggravated Assault. The storage building was completely destroyed. The third fire occurred around 3:30 A.M. on the morning of October 25 at 331 South Main Street in Ashburn, Georgia. The 2,432 square-foot, 121-year-old structure was unoccupied at the time of the fire and suffered major damage.

“Due to Mr. Poke’s repeated, life-threatening actions and destruction of historic homes, this arrest was a top priority for local and state law enforcement officials,” said Safety Fire Commissioner John F. King. “I would like to applaud the investigators in my office, along with the City of Ashburn Police Department and the City of Ashburn Fire Department, for their hard work in bringing Mr. Poke to justice.”

Investigators in the Safety Fire Commissioner’s Office were assisted by the City of Ashburn Fire and Police Departments with this investigation. First Degree Arson is a felony punishable by a fine of no more than \$50,000 or by a prison term between one and twenty years, or both.



9/29/19



10/14/19



10/25/19

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