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Monday, December 15, 2025

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

Charges Pending After Authorities Uncover Large-Scale Counterfeit Luxury Goods Operation



Charges are pending following an investigation by the Monroe County Sheriff's Office that uncovered a large-scale operation allegedly selling counterfeit luxury merchandise.

According to the sheriff's office, investigators were contacted in late October or early November by a private company that specializes in identifying fraudulent sales of counterfeit goods on behalf of luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Coach. The company had been tracking an online retailer known as *The Luxe Closet* since November 2023 for allegedly selling fake luxury-branded items.

Investigators said the operation initially distributed products from Hamilton County before shifting its distribution center to Madisonville sometime in 2025, prompting the company to alert local authorities.

Monroe County investigators confirmed the alleged fraud by making multiple online purchases and retrieving the items from the Madisonville location. With assistance from the Madisonville Police Department and the Tenth Judicial District Attorney's Office, authorities executed search warrants at both the Madisonville distribution center and the owner's residence in Hamilton County.

Continued on Page 4 (see Counterfeit Goods)

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Monday, Dec. 15, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2

Athens, Tennessee

Fire Crews Respond to Illegal Burn on Highway 310



Firefighters responded Thursday afternoon around 5:30 p.m. to reports of smoke coming from a property along Highway 310 in Etowah. Upon arrival, crews determined the source to be

the burning of household garbage.

Englewood Rural Fire Department and Etowah Rural Fire Department both responded to the scene. No injuries or property damage were reported.

Fire officials are reminding the public that burning household trash is a violation of Environmental Protection Agency regulations and may result in fines.

Photo by Lynn Ingram, Englewood Rural FD

Rear-End Crash Reported Near School Bus Stop in Niota



A rear-end collision occurred Friday just before 4 p.m. on Willson Street near Starr Street in the City of Niota after a vehicle slowed for a school bus.

A 2022 Buick LaCrosse was struck from behind by a 2015 Jeep Wrangler while stopping. Two females were traveling in the Buick, and a single female was driving the Jeep. No injuries were reported, and all parties declined medical treatment at the scene.

Niota Fire and North McMinn Fire responded along with AMR and the McMinn County Sheriff's Office. The crash is under investigation by Tennessee Highway Patrol Trooper Dean Conk.

Source: David Prater, Niota Rural FD

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A promotional banner for WYXI Radio's 'The Trading Post Morning Show'. On the left, a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a white shirt and headphones, is shown from the chest up, speaking into a professional microphone. To his right, two yellow boxes contain the text '94.5 FM' and '1390 AM'. Further right, the text 'BUY! SELL! TRADE!' is displayed in large, bold, black letters. To the right of this, the show's title 'THE TRADING POST MORNING SHOW' is written in large, bold, black letters, with 'MORNING SHOW' in red. Below the title, it says 'WITH J.P. VASQUEZ' in black. On the far right, a red and white logo for 'WYXI RADIO' is shown, featuring a stylized radio tower and the tagline 'The Friendly Voice of the Friendly City'. Below the logo, the frequencies 'FM 94.5 AM 1390' are listed. At the bottom of the banner, a black bar contains the text 'TAKING CALLS DAILY!' in white, followed by the phone number '(423) 745-1390' in white, the show's time slot '8:30 AM - 9:30 AM' in white, and the phrase 'EVERY WEEKDAY' in white.

Bowater Credit Union Donates \$1,000 to Grace and Mercy Ministries

Bowater Credit Union member Erika Galish has won the \$1,000 Pay It Forward prize for her favorite nonprofit doing good in our area: Grace and Mercy Ministries. Bowater Credit Union asks its members to nominate their favorite nonprofit organizations that help people in the counties eligible for credit union membership: Bradley, McMinn, Meigs, Monroe, and Polk. Up to five \$1,000 prizes are awarded each year, and Grace and Mercy Ministries is the fourth winner of 2025.

their mission is providing transportation for people to come to the center for a hot meal and a shower. The center also has a pantry that supplies snack packs to people who might need extra help over weekends and holidays.

Bowater Credit Union began the Pay It Forward program in 2010 to give back to the community it serves. Since the program's inception, Bowater CU has donated \$61,000 to various charities, making a positive impact in our community. For more information, visit BowaterECU.org. Bowater Employees Credit Union is a federally insured financial institution serving those who live, work, or go to school in Bradley, McMinn, Meigs, Monroe, and Polk counties. With five branches, over 20,000 members, and \$300 million in assets, Bowater offers savings, checking, loans, and financial education services. ***Contributed by: Nicole Andrino, Bowater ECU***



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Monday, Dec. 15, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4

Athens, Tennessee

All Injuries Minor Following Crash Involving McMinn County Deputy



All individuals involved in a vehicle crash involving a McMinn County Sheriff's deputy Saturday afternoon were transported to a local hospital as a precaution, according to an updated statement from Sheriff Joe Guy.

The sheriff reported that all injuries were minor.

The crash occurred around **12:30 p.m. on Ingleside Avenue in Athens** while a deputy was transporting an arrestee. Initial information released by the sheriff indicated the deputy's patrol vehicle collided with another car after it reportedly pulled out in front of the patrol unit.

Sheriff Guy said an investigation into the crash is ongoing. No additional details about the cause of the collision were provided in the latest update.

Further information is expected to be released as the investigation continues.

Counterfeit Goods (Continued)

During the search, investigators seized more than 3,000 counterfeit items, including handbags, wallets, clothing, jewelry, watches, and shoes. If authentic, officials estimated the items would have had a retail value of approximately \$1.2 million. Authorities also recovered counterfeit leather spray used to enhance the appearance and smell of the fake products, along with a portable building used for storage and a vehicle allegedly used to transport the merchandise.

Investigators reported finding evidence suggesting the counterfeit goods originated outside the United States. The Monroe County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Division continues to investigate the source of the products.

Officials emphasized that while it is not illegal to possess counterfeit items for personal use, it is illegal to sell or possess such items with the intent to sell. The investigation remains ongoing, and charges are pending.

Source: [WATE](#)

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Monday, Dec. 15, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 5

Athens, Tennessee

Athens City Council Seeks Applicants for Volunteer Boards and Committees

The Athens City Council is accepting applications from residents interested in serving the community through appointments to several volunteer boards and committees.

City officials say the openings provide an opportunity for citizens to take an active role in local government by contributing ideas, expertise, and guidance that help shape the city's future. Applicants should be committed, thoughtful, and willing to participate in regular meetings and civic responsibilities.

Current vacancies are available on the Board of Adjustment & Appeals, Council Advisory Committee, Historic Preservation Commission, and the Municipal Regional Planning Commission.

Residents can find eligibility requirements, meeting schedules, responsibilities, and application materials online at:

cityofathensstn.com/boards-committees.


For additional information, the Office of the City Manager can be contacted at 423-744-2702 or by email at admin@athensstn.gov


Obituaries

Carol Gilles Hurn, 78 of Decatur, passed away on Friday, December 12. She served as a former church clerk at Faith Baptist Church, and was a dedicated member of Walnut Grove Baptist Church. A funeral service will be held at 11 a.m., on Wednesday, December 17 at Walnut Grove Baptist Church. Interment will follow in the Meigs County Memorial Gardens. The family will receive friends from 5 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16, 2025 in the Chapel of Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services is honored to serve the Hurn family.

Margaret Jane "Peggy" Hassell, 74 of Athens, passed away on Wednesday, December 10. Peggy enjoyed traveling, visiting the beach, gardening, and spending time with her family. She was a devoted member of Keith Memorial United Methodist Church and a graduate of Clayton State. Peggy worked locally at Edward Jones for 18 years as a senior branch office administrator and, prior to that, with the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce. There are no services planned at this time. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist Peggy's family during this difficult time.

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