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Education Employee Arrested After Alleged Copper Theft at Boschulte Middle School

Police say surveillance footage shows Benito Dawson II removing copper wiring from air conditioning units and loading it into a vehicle; he faces burglary, embezzlement and destruction of public property charges.

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The Virgin Islands Police Department released a mugshot of Benito Dawson II. Pictured above is the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School on St. Thomas.

ST. THOMAS — A Department of Education employee has been arrested and charged after surveillance footage allegedly captured him removing copper wire from air conditioning units at Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School without authorization.

According to court documents, police were first alerted to the matter in January when the school's principal reported suspected theft on campus. A maintenance worker had discovered that a surveillance camera in a specific area had been destroyed. Despite the damage, available footage was reviewed and allegedly showed another maintenance worker, Benito Dawson II, entering the property on Saturday, January 3, and causing the destruction.

The principal contacted Dawson's supervisor, who reportedly stated that Dawson had not been assigned to work at the school on that date.

The footage also allegedly shows Dawson removing copper lines from air conditioning units located in two separate school buildings. The principal informed his superiors within the Virgin Islands Department of Education after reviewing the footage.

Police later examined the surveillance video and confirmed the principal's account, according to the complaint. In addition to the alleged removal of copper wiring, Dawson was reportedly recorded loading the material into a vehicle.

Officers made contact with Dawson on Thursday. During the interaction, he allegedly admitted to removing the copper wire from air conditioning units that he claimed were already damaged. The copper was then sold to a recycling facility on St. Thomas, according to police. Dawson reportedly stated that his supervisor was aware of his actions.

Following the interview, officers arrested Dawson and charged him with destruction of public school property, embezzlement of property by employee, third-degree burglary, and petit larceny.

He was remanded into custody pending his advice of rights hearing, which is scheduled for Friday morning before Magistrate Julie Smith Todman.