



# SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

## SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR

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## Ohio Man Sentenced to Prison for Botched Tree Removal

### *Elderly Man Seriously Injured After Tree Falls On House*

AKRON, Ohio (Monday, July 09, 2018) – Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Tammy O'Brien sentenced Cory Howard, 27, of Springfield, Ohio, to 18 months in prison in connection with debris removal caused by severe weather last November. As part of the debris removal, Howard's employees attempted to cut down a tree which fell on a Sagamore Hills home, seriously injuring the elderly homeowner.

Howard pled guilty on June 1, 2018 to the following charges:

- Theft from the Elderly – a felony of the 4<sup>th</sup> degree
- Failure to Remit Ohio Sales Tax – a felony of the 4<sup>th</sup> degree
- Falsification – a misdemeanor of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree
- Vendor or Transient Vendor's License violation – a misdemeanor of the 4<sup>th</sup> degree
- Operating without a vendor's License – a minor misdemeanor

On November 19, 2017, emergency crews were called to 8084 Rolling Brook Road in Sagamore Hills after a tree fell on the home, injuring the owner, 82-year-old George Homa. Sagamore Hills Police determined Mr. Homa hired Alternative Property Maintenance to clean up debris following a strong storm which hit the area. During the process of removing the debris, workers with Alternative Property Maintenance were cutting down a tree when it fell on the home and trapped Mr. Homa. Mr. Homa suffered significant injuries and was taken by LifeFlight to a nearby hospital.

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Mr. Homa underwent three surgeries as doctors repaired his broken pelvis and shattered tibia. He was just released from a rehabilitation facility after spending several months there recovering from those injuries. Repairs to the Homa home have not yet been completed, more than six months after the incident.

Mr. Howard faced a maximum of three years in prison. Judge O'Brien also ordered \$6,500 in restitution to be paid to Mr. Homa and another victim.

A follow-up investigation by the Summit County Prosecutor's Office discovered Cory Howard is the owner of Alternative Property Maintenance, aka Alternative Tree Care and All-American Tree Specialists. Further investigation shows none of these businesses were registered with the Ohio Secretary of State's Office. Additionally, Mr. Howard did not register with the Summit County Office of Consumer Affairs, which is required to conduct door-to-door business solicitation in Summit County. In all, Cory Howard operated four tree cutting businesses and owned a fleet of 12 vehicles.