

GLOBAL NEWS



UK TAXI DRIVER RUNS DOWN PASSENGER AFTER FARE DISPUTE...

A taxi driver was jailed last week for driving into one of his passengers after he got out following a fares dispute. The licensed taxi flung the victim into the air and he struck another car on the way down, suffering serious injuries.

“It was an incident of using your car as a weapon and a custodial sentence is inevitable,” said Judge Brian Lewis. He told Mohammed Rashel, of Widnes, that he was very fortunate he had not been charged with causing grievous bodily harm. The victim, Christopher Seymour and his two companions, left the taxi after the argument and Rashel drove off, but then did a U-turn.

“You quite deliberately drove your taxi across the road towards them, whether to scare them or deliberately injure, it was a terribly dangerous thing to do, particularly from a professional driver,” said Judge Lewis. “I am prepared to accept there may have been a degree of frustration or even provocation, but nothing can possibly excuse what you did,” he added. Rashel, aged 29, was convicted of dangerous driving. He was jailed for 15 months, banned from driving for two years and ordered to take a re-test before he can drive again. He won’t be getting his Hackney licence back.

Liverpool Crown Court heard that he had agreed to take the three young men from Liverpool to Ellesmere Port on the evening of December 2 last year and agreed a fixed price. During the journey, he discovered he had used the wrong tariff and a row developed with his passengers when he told them. He stopped on the A41 at Bromborough on the Wirral and they got out after he refused to take them any further. “He then performed a U-turn to go back to Liverpool, but during that manoeuvre drove directly at Mr Seymour at an estimated speed of 30mph,” said Ben Jones, prosecuting. Mr Seymour tried to jump out of the way but was struck and flung into the air, hitting another car on the way down. He suffered two fractures to his pelvis, two suspected broken ribs, cartilage damage and lacerations to his head.

Zia Chaudhry, defending, said that Rashel had never been in trouble before and told the court: “He is adamant he did not intend to cause injury.”

AND IN HONOLULU TOO!

A 52-year-old cab driver has been sentenced to life in prison for trying to run over one of his passengers four times! Guillermo Fernandez was convicted of attempted murder in a Circuit Court jury trial. Judge Dexter Del Rosario imposed the mandatory life sentence after hearing testimony from the victim, Ryan Foth, and from relatives of the defendant.

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Michelle Pu’u stressed that Fernandez tried again and again to hit Foth with his vehicle after the two men argued in the street. “It wasn’t just one time, it wasn’t two times, it was four times,” she said. “He drove around the block and came back to try again. This wasn’t a

case of self defence,” she said. Defense lawyer Todd Eddins said Fernandez “had made some mistakes, but he certainly didn’t intend to kill anyone.”

PCO EXAMINERS FROM OZ SUSPENDED

South Australia Road Safety Minister, Carmel Zollo, has announced that four taxi licence examiners have been investigated by police for corruption, but went on to add that investigating police officers found there was insufficient evidence to take action for fraudulent or corrupt behaviour against them.

Ms Zollo claimed that the examiners were responsible for granting licences to 58 immigrants from a particular ethnic group - believed to be Indian - whose driving qualifications were so low that they could not be recognised in South Australia. The immigrants later failed a practical driving test for taxi licences, despite having “passed” SA driving licence tests. Ms Zollo said unnamed representatives from the taxi industry complained to the government because they were concerned about the quality of drivers seeking to enter the taxi industry.

The four examiners were suspended. The matter came to the Government’s attention in June, but was only made public after media investigations. Ms Zollo said there was concern and that an investigation at the highest levels was held. She continued: “We have strengthened all our systems in terms of the way that we assess people; objective screening tests for those that want to become taxi drivers, as well as saying to our authorised examiners that they need to actually understand their responsibilities and that if they don’t, then they will have their licenses suspended.” She added that she has also approved a different audit system for those that wanted to become taxi drivers.

“At this time,” she said, “my advice is that there is no evidence to suggest that it is more widespread than what we’ve uncovered.” She then added that the 58 immigrants came from a particular ethnic group. “However, each one was individually interviewed by police and there was no evidence that there was criminal activity,” Ms Zollo said. Taxi Council vice president Wally Sievers welcomed additional checks for people who applied to become an accredited taxi driver. “But it’s pretty horrifying to think there are potential drivers on the road who shouldn’t be on the road because of some process that had been compromised,” he said. “From the taxi industry’s point of view, we’ve had 18 months of evaluation and changes and we’re pleased the Government has got a few people out of the system that shouldn’t be there.”

Opposition transport spokesman, Duncan McFetridge, said there had long been rumours about fraudulent licences and he was surprised it took so long for the government to act. “The State Government should have been looking into this matter much earlier, rather than waiting for the taxi industry to force an investigation,” he said. “It is also disappointing that the Government only made this public because of media inquiries. Their Taxi Council seems to be completely inactive on this.”

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