

Fatal Denial

Summary

On a Friday night before Christmas a 28 year old male who had been drinking prior to and while driving hit at high speed, an innocent vehicle approaching from the opposite direction. The defendant went to the local pub between 3 and 4 pm one afternoon, he was shouted some drinks.

Outcome

The crash left one passenger in the other vehicle dead and the driver badly injured. The defendant was uninjured. The defendant refused to give a blood sample immediately after the crash and denies the fact that alcohol really DID play a part in the consequences of the crash.

Consequences to Family

The driver of the other vehicle and his wife (who was killed) had been married for 30 years. The husband said it will take him much longer than the jail term (16 months) served on the defendant to get over the loss of his wife. He has trouble sleeping at night and says that "No apology, no amount of money, no...nothing will replace what we've lost."

Consequences to Friends

When the defendant was seen drinking behind the wheel prior to leaving the pub, one of his mates reminded him about the ads on TV about drink-driving. A short time later the same friend came across the scene of the accident and was devastated and frustrated to think that he had tried to prevent something like this happening.

Consequences to Communities

The local pub is the social hub of the area. It was a rundown pub where the landlord would not be making a lot of profit and therefore sell alcohol regardless of how much people have consumed. The Police have the view that publicans need to take responsibility in selling alcohol to patrons who are intoxicated.

Summary

On a Friday night in Ashburton a driver of a white car was intoxicated and very closely following another car. The car in front sped up to get away from the bright headlights. The white car pulled out to pass the car in front at a high speed and never came straight again. The white car drove straight through a street sign and into a house on the right hand side of the road. The car flipped and the driver of the vehicle had the car pinned on top of him.

Outcome

The victims in this accident found they were very bored on the night of the accident and consequently made some irresponsible decisions. They didn't have a lot to do so they drove around town aimlessly. The driver who was intoxicated was killed. The owner of the white car, who was a passenger during the crash suffered a broken back and fractured her neck in two places. She is now confined to a wheelchair for life. Many of the victims in the video said their attitudes towards speed and drink-driving have changed.

Consequences to Family

The family of the driver has lost a son and a brother. The older brother partly blames himself because he saw his brother driving prior to the crash and knew that he had been drinking. He allowed his brother to continue driving as he did not think that he was "rolling drunk". The older brother now has a completely different attitude towards drink-driving.

The family of the girl who owned the car has suffered a lot of grief and is left with a daughter who will spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair.

Consequences to Friends

Many teenagers around Ashburton have lost a friend or are left with a friend in a wheelchair. This has changed many of their attitudes and also caused them a lot of heart ache and misery.

Consequences to Communities

Many people of all ages in Ashburton would have known the victims in the crash. A lot of people will be more aware of the consequences and the risk that is taken when someone chooses to drink and drive. The house that was crashed into was damaged, causing financial and emotional stress.

When these types of crashes occur the driver is not the only victim, many people are affected, one way or another.

Summary

Two cars were heading from Raetihi to Ohakune (small North Island towns) and the other vehicle was traveling in the opposite direction. One car pulled out to pass another one on a blind corner and there was an approaching vehicle. The driver of the car that pulled out to pass was intoxicated. The two cars had a head on collision.

Outcome

Five people in the drunk driver's car were killed and one passenger survived. The driver from the other car was killed. An ambulance officer tried to find a pulse of the surviving passenger but didn't know which arm or leg belonged to which person because the bodies were all entwined in a pile behind the driver's seat.

Consequences to Family

Several members of one family were killed. It would be hard to imagine the grief and devastation they would be suffering, with more than one family member killed.

Consequences to Friends

Many people would have lost more than one friend in this crash. The driver had just purchased a stencil at a shop in one of the towns and the shopkeeper felt as though he could have done something to avoid the crash from happening.

Consequences to Communities

The two towns were small communities so everyone knew at least someone who was involved in the accident or even killed. Most people in the two small towns knew the driver who had been drinking. A local school bus came upon the scene of the accident which could have been quite disturbing for the children.

As a result of many drink-driving crashes occurring every year the Government has set up advertising and enforcement campaigns which highlight the link between drink-driving and road crashes. The campaigns aim to bring a large change in attitudes and behaviour and a consequent reduction in road trauma caused by drink-driving.

Advertising theme

<p>IF YOU DRINK THEN DRIVE, YOU'RE A BLOODY IDIOT.</p>

Facts

- Drink-driving contributed to 26% of all fatal crashes and 14% of all injury crashes in 2000
- the social cost of these crashes was about \$570 million
- on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, two out of every three fatal crashes involve a driver who has been drinking alcohol
- if you drive with an alcohol level over the legal blood alcohol limit (80mg per 100ml), you are three times as likely to be involved in a crash as you are with a zero blood alcohol level
- opposite to what most people think, you are more likely to be seriously injured or killed in a car crash if you are drunk rather than sober
- two-thirds of all fatal crashes occur on the open road versus urban roads.
- 83% of drivers with excess alcohol levels in fatal or serious road crashes are male
- the most at risk group are 18 - 30 year old males and, of these, the 18 - 21 year olds are mostly at risk
- males 16 - 30 years represent 50% of all drunk drivers in crashes

What I Have Learnt

From my experience I have gained knowledge that drink driving is a serious offence and any one who drinks and drives will suffer severely whether it affects themselves, their family and friends or the community.

A lot of people have this idea in their heads that 'it will never happen to me' and facts show that it does, and can, happen to anyone who chooses to drink and drive at anytime. When someone who is drunk or has been drinking gets behind the wheel of a vehicle, the risk of having a crash is much greater than if the person was sober. Innocent victims are killed due to people who drink and drive because the person's perception is altered. This causes trauma for many families and friends who have lost someone due to the stupidity of a person who drunk and drove.

As a teenager, I have witnessed that there is a lot of responsibility to be the sober driver of a vehicle. Generally there will be pressure from friends who are likely to be drinking and want the driver to join in and have a good time as well. When someone accepts the responsibility of being the sober driver they must not consume any alcohol and drive within the law, regardless of the pressures on them.

I have recently completed a Defensive Driving Course at school. From this course I have gained a lot more knowledge and facts about why people drink and drive, some typical scenarios and the consequences of these scenarios. It is definitely not worth the risk of getting behind the wheel after you have consumed any amount of alcohol. No one wants to see innocent people injured or killed and no one wants to lose their license or pay fines because of an irresponsible decision that they have made. I know that families, friends and communities suffer because of people who drink and drive.

From watching the video 'Fatal Denial' I have learnt that you cannot take life for granted and it does not matter whether you are the person who chooses to drink and drive or an innocent driver, we are

all at risk while driving on the road. People need to reduce this risk by choosing not to drink and drive. The examples shown in the video are typical situations that occur everyday in New Zealand. I believe that the words 'fatal denial', mean that someone is denying death or the way that death is caused, implying that attitude 'it will never happen to me or anyone I know'.

Some people may be lucky not to have a crash or kill someone. That is the thought that scares me the most. I don't think I could live with myself, knowing that I was a killer. In the Oxford Dictionary the definition given for the word kill is **1** *to make a person or thing die.* **2** *to destroy or put an end to something.*

Previously, I chose to be ignorant of the severity of drinking and driving and its consequences – now I am not.