

New Bedford drunk driver convicted of manslaughter; sentenced to state prison

"A 31-year-old New Bedford drunk driver whose reckless driving resulted in the death of a Dartmouth father of two young daughters in November of 2018 was sentenced yesterday in Fall River Superior Court to serve five to seven years in state prison, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Justin Castro pled guilty to an indictment charging with Motor Vehicle Manslaughter connected to the November 13, 2018 crash that resulted in the death of 39-year-old David Dos Santos.

On that date, at approximately 1:26 am, there were multiple 911 calls regarding a two motor vehicle crash at the intersection of Kempton St and Brownell Avenue in New Bedford. New Bedford Police arrived on the scene first and found a gray 1999 Toyota Corolla resting near a traffic pole on the southeast corner of the intersection. The passenger side and rear end of the Corolla were heavily damaged, and airbags had deployed. Mr. Dos Santos, who was the sole occupant inside the Corolla, was unresponsive and later determined to be deceased.

Approximately 10 yards south of the Corolla was a 2011 Chevrolet Cruze with Justin Castro, the defendant, as the driver. The vehicle had significant front end damage and deployed airbags. Mr. Castro was transported to Rhode Island Hospital where blood was drawn for medical reasons by hospital staff. The blood alcohol content at the time of the blood draw was .228, nearly three times the legal limit. A follow up investigation determined the defendant had been consuming alcohol at various establishments in the hours prior to the collision.

A civilian witness at the crash scene indicated that that the Cruze – which was operated by Mr. Castro – was traveling east on Kempton Street at a high rate of speed, went through a red light and struck the Corolla, which was traveling south across the intersection from Route 140. It was later determined that the defendant was driving 61 MPH in a 35 MPH zone at the point of impact.

It is believed Mr. Dos Santos was driving home from work at the time of the crash. He had worked part-time at Slainte Irish Pub, New Bedford, and full-time at Gilbert's Jewelers on Pleasant Street, Fall River. Two weeks prior to the fatal collision, Dos Santos helped save the life of a shooting victim who showed up at the door of the jewelry store, bleeding profusely from a gunshot wound to the leg.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Patrick Driscoll and the state prison sentence was imposed by Judge Renee Dupuis.

“As a result of being highly intoxicated, the defendant killed an innocent man. This case is a tragedy for all people involved. My heart goes out to the victim's family for their loss, which they will never recover from,” District Attorney Quinn said.”