



Lower Township Police Department

405 Breakwater Road
Erma, NJ 08204
609-886-1619

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PENNSYLVANIA MAN HAD SEVEN (7) DWI ARRESTS PRIOR TO FATAL MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT

The Lower Township Police Department announced on Wednesday, September 16, 2009, that John J. Lawless, age 37, of Caster Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who has been charged with Death by Auto as a result of a head on motor vehicle accident that took the life of local resident Frederick Shelton, age 50, had seven (7) prior DWI arrest.

Lower Township Police Chief, Edward Donohue stated that Lawless was arrested for DWI in Pennsylvania on the following dates which are public record and were obtained from a First Judicial District of Pennsylvania Court Summary which is available online.

- 1. October 3, 1996 – Driving While Intoxicated arrest.**
- 2. March 16, 1998 – Driving While Intoxicated arrest. Minimum 2 months/Maximum 3 months prison term, plead guilty.**
- 3. September 7, 1998 – Driving While Intoxicated arrest. Minimum 2 months/Maximum 3 months prison term, plead guilty.**
- 4. April 29, 1999 – Driving While Intoxicated arrest. Plead guilty to reckless endangering another person. Placed on one (1) year probation. Plead guilty to Driving While Intoxicated, minimum 2 months/maximum 3 months prison term.**

NOTE: Lawless' Pennsylvania Driver's License was suspended indefinitely on or about 2001.

- 5. July 26, 2004 – Driving While Intoxicated arrest. Dismissed under the speedy trial regulations.**
- 6. June 11, 2005 – Driving While Intoxicated arrest. Minimum 1 year/maximum 2 year prison term. Plead guilty.**
- 7. December 24, 2008 – Involved in a motor vehicle accident in the City of Philadelphia, arrested for Driving While Intoxicated and Criminal Mischief.**

Case is due to be heard in a Philadelphia Court in October of 2009.



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Mrs. Sheri Shelton, age 44 and her 13 year old daughter, Brittany were also in the vehicle at the time her husband was killed.

Mrs. Shelton is still listed in critical condition at the Harrah's Regional Trauma Center at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, while her daughter is in stable condition at Cooper Hospital in Camden.

In addition to the Death by Auto charge, Lawless also faces two (2) counts of Assault with a Motor Vehicle, Operating a Motor Vehicle While Intoxicated, Driving with a Suspended Driver's License, Reckless Driving and Failure to Maintain a Single Lane.

Lower Township Police Chief, Edward Donohue stated at the time of the accident, "The bottom line here is that this man should not have been operating a motor vehicle on any highway in any state based on his suspended driving privileges and his record of previous DWI arrest."

On Wednesday Chief Donohue stated that the Lower Township Police Department will monitor this case closely with the assistance of the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, as the charges filed against Mr. Lawless make their way through the New Jersey Criminal Justice System.

Lawless is still currently under guard by Lower Township Police Officers at the Atlantic Care Regional Medical Center.

Lawless will be arraigned on the criminal charges pending his release from the hospital. His bail has been set at \$100,000.

Press Release Prepared By:

Detective Lieutenant Thomas Keywood