

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL

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December 14, 2011
PR 11-45

ABC Suspends License of A-1 Liquor & Deli in Fresno *Case Tied to Greyhound Bus Crash and Prompted ABC TRACE Investigation*

Fresno- On December 14, 2011, the California Alcoholic Beverage Control suspended the license of A-1 Liquor & Deli at 3147 North Maroa Avenue in Fresno. The indefinite suspension will last until the license is transferred to another person who is acceptable to the ABC.

The suspension means the store cannot sell alcohol until a new owner takes over the license.

The action is the result of a TRACE (Target Responsibility for Alcohol-Connected Emergencies) investigation into an alcohol-related crash that occurred on July 22, 2010. On that night, a Greyhound bus collided on Highway 99 with a vehicle driven by 18-year old Sylvia Garay. A third vehicle collided with the bus and a fourth vehicle collided with debris on the highway. The multi-vehicle crash resulted in the death of Garay, and her two passengers Vanessa Gonzalez (19) and Stephenie Cordoba (20). Three others died in the crash including the driver of the Greyhound bus, 57-year-old James Charles Jewett of Sacramento, and two bus passengers, Epifania Solis, 60, of Madera and Tomas Contreras, 79, of Winton.

When ABC learned from the California Highway Patrol that alcohol may have been involved, the Department immediately launched a TRACE investigation to determine the source of the alcohol consumed by the underage women. In a joint investigation conducted by ABC and CHP, investigators determined that 21-year old Michelle Cole purchased the alcoholic beverages that Garay consumed before the crash. The alcohol was purchased from Mohamed Alyafaie, one of the owners of A-1 Liquor and Deli. After the purchase, Cole furnished the alcohol to

Garay, Cordoba and Gonzalez, who were later observed consuming the alcoholic beverages.

Prior to the crash, the underage individuals were also seen at a local nightclub, but were not seen consuming alcohol at that location.

California state law prohibits any person from selling, furnishing, giving, or causing to be sold, furnished, or given away any alcoholic beverage to any person under 21 years of age. Although Alyafaie sold the alcoholic beverages to 21-year old Cole after checking her ID and confirming her age, he caused the alcoholic beverages to be furnished to Garay and Gonzalez who carried the alcohol up to the counter where Alyafaie was standing and were present at the counter during the entire transaction. Alyafaie was also in a position to see 19-year old Gonzalez carrying the alcohol as she exited the store.

As a result, ABC filed an accusation against the alcoholic beverage license of A-1 Liquor and has now suspended the license indefinitely until the license is transferred to a new owner.

“It is a huge tragedy when so many lives are lost in an incident such as this. All of the persons who died that day were valuable members of the communities in which they lived, and were loved by their families and friends who will forever be impacted by their loss. What makes this particularly sad is that the situation appears to have been completely preventable.” said ABC Fresno District Administrator Christine Weldon.

ABC is a Department of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency. The Department was awarded a grant to fund the TRACE program by the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).