



Bus Driver Sentenced For DUI

Fullenwider sentenced for DUI, child endangerment

By Daryl Kelley

An Ojai woman pleaded guilty Friday to driving a school bus filled with students while intoxicated, and was sentenced to a month in jail and four years of probation.

Kim Fullenwider, 53, was also ordered to pay \$3,326 in fines and restitution after admitting that she endangered 21 children on her Ojai Unified School District bus by driving with a blood-alcohol level in excess of .04 percent. That is the legal limit for an operator of a commercial vehicle in California.

Fullenwider's actual blood-alcohol level was between .07 and .08, according to a breath test conducted by the CHP after her school bus and another vehicle collided at about 7:15 a.m. Sept. 30, 2009.

The rear of the bus was struck at a slow speed as Fullenwider made a U-turn at Baldwin and Los Encinos roads. Officers decided the accident was her fault and that she had been drinking. No one was injured.

A bus driver for the Ojai district for 16 years, Fullenwider resigned her position two days after the Sept. 30 accident. Her driving record was unblemished previously, district officials said.

"She's extraordinarily unlikely to get another job driving any type of passenger vehicle, nor does she intend to seek one," said her attorney, Jay Leiderman

"She feels absolutely awful," Leiderman said. "But her plea and her almost immediate surrender of her job is, we're hopeful, a reasonable way to accept responsibility for this."

Before the accident, Fullenwider had driven buses for 36 years and had never had even a traffic ticket, her attorney said.

But she does not dispute that she was intoxicated when she took the wheel to take kids to school that early Wednesday morning last year, he said.

She'd drunk an uncertain amount of beer the night before, he said. "It was enough to have her in excess of .04 in the morning."

Fullenwider's sentence was the result of a plea agreement under which she pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors – driving a commercial vehicle while intoxicated and endangering the health of a child – while a third misdemeanor was dropped.

Fullenwider was directed to begin serving her sentence Feb. 5.

January 8th, 2010 at 12:23 pm