

Trucker accused in fatal crash pleads not guilty

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PASADENA - A trucker accused of ignoring weight restrictions on Angeles Crest Highway, causing a multi-vehicle wreck that killed a man and his 12-year-old daughter, pleaded not guilty today to vehicular manslaughter.

Marcos Costa, 43, will return to court in Pasadena on May 13, when a date will be set for a preliminary hearing on the two felony counts. He has been released on \$200,000 bail, according to a court clerk.

According to sheriff's officials, Costa was driving a double-decker car hauler downhill on Angeles Crest Highway toward the Foothill (210) Freeway when the vehicle's brakes failed on April 1 at 5:50 p.m. The truck slammed into a red car, pushing it about 200 yards. The occupants, 58-year-old Angel Jorge Posca and his daughter, Angelina, died at the scene.

Costa maneuvered the truck downhill and struck four other vehicles at the intersection of Angeles Crest and Foothill Boulevard, then slammed into a coffee shop and bookstore. A dozen people were injured in the wreck, three of them critically.

In the aftermath of the crash, La Canada Flintridge city officials lashed out at Caltrans, saying the state agency had failed to respond to their concerns about safety on the highway.

The city had first appealed to the state for changes on the route after a Sept. 5 crash, in which a truck carrying 70,000 pounds of onions plowed through the same intersection and into the parking lot of the Hill Street Cafe, demolishing seven vehicles but causing only one minor injury.

In response to the uproar over the April 1 crash, Caltrans instituted a 90-day ban on five-axle trucks along Angeles Crest Highway between the Angeles Forest Highway and 210 Freeway. Legislation is now pending in Sacramento to permanently ban trucks on the route.

At an earlier court hearing, Costa's attorney, Mark Werskman, said the wreck was a "tragic accident" and that his client was "heartbroken and devastated over what happened." He called Costa, who lives in a suburb of Boston, Mass., a "good man from a good family."

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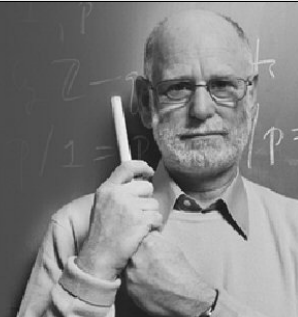


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