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**QUEENS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO AGGRAVATED VEHICULAR HOMICIDE  
FOR DRUNK DRIVING SPREE OF CRASHES THAT KILLED A PEDESTRIAN**

*Defendant Faces 5 to 15 Years in Prison*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Jorge Samaniego, 51, has pleaded guilty to aggravated vehicular homicide for causing the death of a pedestrian in a December 2019 string of crashes in Woodside.

District Attorney Katz said, “Mr. Samaniego made the selfish decision to get behind the wheel of a car while drunk. His actions led to multiple collisions and the death of a man who had simply been taking a walk in the neighborhood. No one has the right to be this reckless.”

Samaniego, of Hull Avenue in Maspeth, pleaded guilty yesterday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Gene Lopez to aggravated vehicular homicide. Judge Lopez ordered the defendant to return to Court on October 4, 2021 and is expected to sentence the defendant to a term of 5 to 15 years of incarceration.

District Attorney Katz said that on December 11, 2019, shortly after 8 p.m. near Broadway and 55<sup>th</sup> Street, Samaniego was driving a Honda Odyssey minivan and rear-ended a red Infiniti as the driver was approaching a red light. The driver of the Infiniti exited his vehicle to survey the damage and asked the defendant if he was ok. Without saying a word, Samaniego drove away from the scene.

Continuing, Samaniego drove erratically on Broadway to 60<sup>th</sup> Street, went through a red light, struck Woodside resident Alberto Zamacona, 47, in the crosswalk and kept driving.

DA Katz said at 61<sup>st</sup> Street the defendant veered into oncoming traffic to avoid slamming into a car stopped at a red light. The minivan then struck a taxi head on with so much force the vehicle was pushed backwards and struck a Toyota Sienna, which in turn hit a Jeep Grand Cherokee.

According to the complaint, Mr. Zamacona was taken to a nearby hospital, where he died with irreversible brain damage. The chain reaction crash caused damage to the three vehicles and one of the drivers needed medical attention for non-life-threatening injuries.

The DA said when police responded to the scene, they found the defendant exhibiting signs of intoxication. Samaniego had bloodshot eyes, slurred speech and smelled of alcohol. The defendant was taken to a nearby police precinct where a test showed he had a blood alcohol level of .187, above the legal limit of .08

The investigation was conducted by Detective Frank Passarella and Police Officer Raphael Mohammed of the New York City Police Department's Highway District and responding officers of the 108<sup>th</sup> Precinct.

Assistant District Attorney Thomas Rooney, of the District Attorney's Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau, prosecuted the case, with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Kaitlyn Gaskin, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Jonathan Sennett, VCE Bureau Chief and John Kosinski, Deputy Bureau Chief of the Vehicular Homicide Unit, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave and Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel Saunders.

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