



Four Hurt When a Pedicab Slams Into a Taxi in Brooklyn



Theodore Parisienne

A witness said the pedicab had just crossed the Williamsburg Bridge and was "coming off the bridge fast" when it hit a taxi.

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IN THEATERS JULY 29

By AL BAKER and MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM
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A pedicab driver crashed into a yellow cab after crossing the Williamsburg Bridge into Brooklyn on Wednesday morning, injuring the pedicab driver and two of his three passengers, the police said.

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The accident occurred at 7:26 a.m., a witness said. "The pedicab was just coming off the bridge fast," said the witness, Frank A. Williams, 49. "He drove into the street, straight off the bridge, and hit the cab. Then, when he hit the cab, he just tumbled over. The whole front of the bike caved in."

Mr. Williams, a [day laborer](#) who was on a nearby corner looking for work, and others ran to the fractured pedicab, which came to rest at Bedford Avenue and Broadway, and Mr. Williams dialed 911 from his cellphone.

"He hit his head pretty bad," Mr. Williams said of the driver. "The whole front wheel was just embedded in his face." He also saw one of the passengers, a young woman: "The girl was in bad shape. Her knee was swollen. She was very conscious; she was crying, and she was in pain."

The pedicab driver, identified as Nicholas Nicometi, 42, was in serious condition at Bellevue

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Hospital Center on Wednesday evening, said Minerva Joubert, a hospital spokeswoman.

The injured woman, Stephanie Monfort, 22, was in good condition at the hospital, Ms. Joubert said. A second passenger, a man in his 20s, was injured, but it was not clear how seriously, and a third passenger, also a man in his 20s, was not seriously hurt. The taxicab driver was not injured.

The accident occurred as the pedicab exited the eastbound pedestrian walkway of the bridge, the police said.

One of the other passengers, Johnny Richardson, Ms. Monfort's companion, said they had met Mr. Nicometi at a bar near Times Square, and he had offered them a ride to their apartment in Bushwick. The ride was uneventful, he said, until they picked up speed on the bridge's Brooklyn side. The passengers begged Mr. Nicometi to stop, but the driver "started swerving and going down the bridge all crazy."

Mr. Richardson, 28, said he had tried to slow the cab by grabbing the railings lining the path. "He rammed right into the cab," said Mr. Richardson, who sprained his wrists. "I didn't know what was happening."

Although a law exists that prohibits pedicabs from traveling on bridges and in tunnels, the city does not enforce the ban because of a lawsuit challenging the law's licensing provisions. The suit has been resolved, but the city must draft new rules and hold hearings before the law can be enforced.

Detectives from the 90th Precinct were investigating. No criminal charges had been filed by Wednesday evening.

Other pedicab operators said they did not understand why a pedicab would be operating so early in the morning, particularly in that neighborhood.

"This is a very unusual circumstance, a pedicab on that bridge at that time of the day," said Peter Meitzler, who owns Manhattan Rickshaw in the West Village. "We're wondering if this wasn't some sort of joy ride."

The city's effort to regulate the growing pedicab industry has been hobbled by a protracted legal fight. The effort, which began in 2006, led to a bill that included requirements that pedicabs have seat belts and an emergency brake system, and that they carry no more than three passengers.

Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) vetoed the bill after pedicab advocates complained about the way the law would have limited licenses and allow owners to operate only 30 cabs at a time.

The [Council overrode the veto](#), but the licensing provisions were [struck down](#) by the courts after pedicab owners filed suit.

The city's Law Department said the process for granting permits for pedicabs had to be resolved before the city could enforce the safety rules.

However, Chad Marlow, a lawyer for the Public Advocacy Group who represents the New York City Pedicab Owners' Association, said, "From the very beginning, the [Department of Consumer Affairs](#) refused to enforce the pedicab laws."

"The pedicab would never have been on the bridge, he would have had seat belts on there, he would have had insurance," he said. "All of these things had been in place if the city had followed their obligations under the law and the police would have done the same. Because they didn't, two people are injured."

Consumer Affairs officials said they were working to enforce the laws as quickly as possible.

Gregg Zukowski, president of the owners' association, said that without proper regulation, there was no way to track accidents. "There are no tracking mechanisms," he said. "Some

dude hits a car, or a car hits you, and there's no accountability."

Colin Moynihan contributed reporting.

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