



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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REPEAT DRUNK DRIVER HEADED TO PRISON

JUDGE IMPOSES 15 MONTH PRISON TERM

LEESBURG, Virginia – May 8, 2015. Mark Robert Firehammer, 46, appeared before the Circuit Court of Loudoun County, in custody, for sentencing on one count of driving while intoxicated, 3rd or subsequent offense, one count of child abuse and neglect, and one count of felony hit and run. Judge Burke F. McCahill committed Firehammer to the Virginia Department of Corrections for one year and three months and ordered him to pay a \$1,000 fine.

On the afternoon of July 9, 2014, Firehammer drove his twelve year old son to an appointment in Leesburg. Throughout the day, a variety of odd behavior was observed, including falling asleep at one point during the child's appointment. After the appointment Firehammer drove his son to a local restaurant, where he was behaving strangely and acting overly friendly toward restaurant employees. The two left the restaurant to return home. During the drive Firehammer ran off the road, drove through a wooden fence, struck and uprooted a tree, causing more than \$1,000 worth of property damage (see attached photo). After exiting the vehicle briefly to assess the damage, Firehammer immediately returned to his heavily damaged Jeep and drove away from the scene with his son.

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Deputies were dispatched to the scene of the accident. While at the scene, the responding deputy was called to Firehammer's home. Firehammer advised law enforcement that he had struck the tree four-five hours earlier in the day. In actuality, the accident occurred approximately thirty minutes earlier. The deputy observed Firehammer to be extremely intoxicated, needing to lean on objects to maintain his balance during their conversation. Additionally, Firehammer's vehicle was at the home and showed recent damage and a piece of the tree still imbedded in the front grill (see attached). Firehammer failed to successfully complete a series of field sobriety tests administered by the deputy and was subsequently arrested. Firehammer entered guilty pleas to these offenses on February 2, 2015 and has been in custody awaiting sentencing since that time.

During the sentencing hearing, evidence was submitted to the court which showed a history of alcohol abuse. Beginning in late 1990s, Firehammer was convicted in an alcohol related driving incident in California. In 2008, Firehammer's troubles continued when he was

convicted in Arizona of "DUI While Under the Extreme Influence of Intoxicating Liquor." In 2011, he was convicted in Loudoun County of DUI and Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor. In the 2011 incident, Firehammer was found passed out in his vehicle in a turn lane on the Rt. 15 bypass in Leesburg. His two sons, ages 7 and 8 at the time, were back seat passengers.

"Seeing these types of incidents are very frustrating for prosecutors," said Commonwealth's Attorney Jim Plowman. "The defendant's repeated alcohol abuse continues to place citizens in danger, to include his own children. Since multiple court contacts have yet to deter his behavior, our next step will be to bring him back before the Circuit Court upon his release and request the Court enter an order of Interdiction." An Order of Interdiction is a declaration that an individual is a habitual drunkard. Once interdicted, a person is prohibited from consuming, purchasing or possessing alcoholic beverages. Any violation of the Order will constitute a Class 1 Misdemeanor and be punishable by up to 12 months in jail and/or a fine of \$2,500. "This process will give law enforcement and the courts more flexibility and a wider range of punishment for more basic alcohol related incidents involving Mr. Firehammer in the future," stated Plowman.

In addition to the active prison sentence, Judge McCahill imposed an additional eleven years and nine months of suspended time, ordered Firehammer to be placed on five years of supervised probation upon his release, and pay \$1,640 in restitution. Firehammer's privilege to operate a motor vehicle is revoked.



Mark Robert Firehammer

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