



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000**

Release # 137-2008
www.queensda.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2008**

CONTACT: QDA/718- 286-6315

NYPD/646-610-6700

DMV/518-473-7000

**“ROGUE” TOW TRUCK OPERATOR CHARGED WITH STEALING 22 CARS
OFF QUEENS STREETS AND DELIVERING THEM TO CRUSHER FOR CASH**

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by New York City Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly and New York State Department of Motor Vehicles Commissioner David J. Swarts, announced today that a tow trucker operator has been charged with stealing 22 automobiles off the streets of Queens over a five-month period this year and selling them to a Brooklyn scrap dealer who then crushed the vehicles.

District Attorney Brown said, “With the price of metal on the rise, the defendant is accused of exploiting a loophole in the Department of Motor Vehicles regulations which allowed him to sell stolen cars to a scrap dealer without possessing the keys or titles to the vehicles – all of which were in drivable condition and had been reported missing by their legitimate owners. In some cases, license plates were still affixed to the vehicles. For many of the car theft victims, the loss is doubly troubling in that they have both lost their primary source of transportation and will not be reimbursed for their loss due to the fact that they did not carry theft insurance because of the age of their vehicles.”

Police Commissioner Kelly said, “The suspect’s insatiable appetite for steel led to his arrest. He had put the cars of unsuspecting Queens motorists on the hook for months. Now he’s on the hook.”

DMV Commissioner Swarts said, “Criminals who illegally obtain motor vehicles and dispose of them by questionable means will be apprehended and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. I applaud and support the continuing cooperative efforts of the dedicated staff of the Queens County District Attorney, New York City law enforcement agencies and the DMV’s Division of Field Investigations who work diligently everyday to deter criminal activity by eliminating unscrupulous operators who steal from the motoring public.”

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Robert Lorenz, 48, of 2 Pettit Drive, Dix Hills, Long Island. The defendant, who is presently being held pending arraignment in Queens Criminal Court, is charged with one count of third-degree grand larceny, 22 counts of fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, 22 counts of first -degree falsifying business records and 22 counts of third-degree unauthorized use of a vehicle. If convicted, the defendant faces up to seven years in prison.

(MORE)

Under New York State Department of Motor Vehicles regulations, a vehicle owner may use DMV form MV-35 to transfer a vehicle – worth \$1,250 or less and at least eight model years old – to a registered vehicle dismantler, an itinerant vehicle collector or a certified scrap processor without having titled the vehicle in their own name.

According to the charges, Lorenz drove a tow truck bearing the words “Kenny’s” or “Cobra Scrap” between March 22, 2008, and July 10, 2008, and hooked up 22 vehicles that had been legally parked on Queens streets and towed them to Allocco Metal Recycling, located at 540 Kingsland Avenue in Brooklyn. It is alleged that when Lorenz arrived at the scrap yard with a vehicle, he would provide the owner with a MV-35 form which stated that he was the owner of the vehicle, and that the vehicle was then weighed and the defendant was paid between \$300 and \$500 – depending on the weight of the vehicle. Finally, It is alleged that the vehicle was crushed. The stolen vehicles allegedly ranged in model years from 1986 to 2001, with most being early 1990s models.

The investigation was conducted by Michael Mulcahy, Assistant Director of Investigations for the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, for the Division of Field Investigations, and by NYPD Auto Crimes Division Detective Rick Seifts, assisted by Detective Daniel Grant, under the supervision of Sergeant Brian Murphy, Lieutenant Wade Kern, Captain Steven M. Zolga, Deputy Inspector Charles V. Talamo, and under the overall supervision of Chief Anthony J. Izzo, of the Organized Crime Control Bureau of the NYPD.

Assistant District Attorney Benjamin J. Mantell, of the District Attorney’s Rackets Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Mary M. Lowenburg, Supervisor of the District Attorney’s Auto Crime Unit, and Assistant District Attorneys Gerard A. Brave, Rackets Bureau Chief, and Marc P. Resnick, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editors: E-version of press release posted at www.queensda.org.