

Police: DUI for Man Found Unconscious in SUV in Middle of Road at 1 PM, Car in Drive

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Not only was a man, later charged with driving while intoxicated, found unconscious behind the wheel of his SUV at 1:19 p.m. last week, in the middle of the roadway, with the vehicle in drive gear, but when a police officer woke him up, the vehicle suddenly started moving forward, police said.

Darien police described the incident with this account (including accusations not proven in court):

Police were first called to Stephen Mather Road at 1:19 p.m. on Tuesday, May 30 on the report of a driver in a gold-colored SUV who appeared confused. Other calls came in to police, with more than one caller saying the man was unconscious.

That's how police found the man, a 38-year-old Stamford resident, when they found the 2002 gold-colored (or tan) Ford Explorer on Talmadge Hill Road, in the middle of the roadway, stopped but still running.

A police officer tapped on the side window to try to rouse the driver, who opened his eyes but appeared disoriented. The officer told the driver to put the SUV in park mode several times, but the driver, apparently from being disoriented, didn't do it.

The officer opened the driver's door, and at that point the driver took his foot off the brake, causing the vehicle to start moving forward. The officer was able to apply the brake and put the vehicle in park.

The driver was removed from the SUV. Police saw he had bloodshot, glassy eyes and a strong smell of an

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alcoholic beverage was coming from him. He was unsteady on his feet and had trouble staying balanced. Police had him sit on the ground off the shoulder of the road while they moved the SUV to a nearby driveway.

Asked if he'd been drinking, the driver said he hadn't. He didn't seem able to answer questions about where he was coming from or going to. Police had him perform standardized field sobriety tests, but he couldn't complete them correctly.

The driver was charged with driving under the influence. Before his SUV was towed away, police did a routine inventory of what was inside the vehicle. An empty Bacardi Rum bottle was found in the back seat. When asked about that, the driver said he was drinking tequila earlier.

The driver agreed to take breathalyzer tests, but when he tried, the machine indicated he was inhaling instead of exhaling into the mouthpiece. If someone doesn't complete the test, for whatever reason, that counts as a refusal; stricter penalties result, imposed by the state Department of Motor Vehicles.

The driver was also charged with failure to drive in the proper lane and driving without a license. He was later released on \$250 bond and is scheduled to appear June 9 in state Superior Court in Stamford.