



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

PRESS RELEASE

2/7/19

TERRA BELLA MAN SENTENCED TO STATE PRISON FOR 11TH DUI

Today in Department 22 of the Tulare County Superior Court, South County Justice Center, Judge Walter Gorelick sentenced Steven Elms, age 44, to the California maximum sentence of 5 years and 4 months in prison for his 11th DUI conviction. On January 17, 2019, a jury convicted Elms of felony driving under the influence of alcohol and felony driving with a BAC of .08% or higher. The special allegations that his BAC was above .15% were also found true. Prior to trial, Elms pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges of driving on a suspended license and failure to utilize an ignition interlock device.

On May 18, 2018, Elms was observed driving 90 mph and swerving by a Tulare County Sheriff's Office detective on Road 256 between Terra Bella and Porterville. He was stopped and taken into custody after an evaluation by the California Highway Patrol.

This conviction constitutes Elms' 11th DUI conviction since 1998, and his ninth such conviction in California. Records indicate he possesses two prior DUI convictions in Utah.

1998 – Misdemeanor driving with .08% BAC or higher
2001 – Misdemeanor driving under the influence of liquor (UT)
2003 – Misdemeanor driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (UT)
2005 – Misdemeanor driving with .08% BAC or higher
2007 – Misdemeanor driving with .08% BAC or higher
2012 – Misdemeanor driving with .08% BAC or higher
2014 – Misdemeanor driving with .08% BAC or higher
2014 – Felony driving with .08% BAC or higher
2016 – Felony driving with .08% BAC or higher
2016 – Felony driving with .08% BAC or higher

"It's frustrating that California law isn't stricter on sentences for driving under the influence, especially in this instance," said District Attorney Tim Ward. "The defendant is clearly a habitual danger to those around him on the road. With so many options to get home safe, there's no excuse to willfully put innocent people in the extreme danger that driving under the influence presents. Hopefully what time he does serve in prison encourages him to make the right choice in the future."

The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Ryan Tiede of the Special Crimes Division and investigated by Sgt. Oladapo Popoola of the Tulare County Sheriff's Office and Officer Salvador Arteaga of the California Highway Patrol.

*Media inquiries can be directed to the Office of the District Attorney, County of Tulare
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