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4/14/2008 12:27:00 PM

Police: School Bus Driver Drugged up and Driving

VIDEO 9/27/2007 6pm report

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By Kristin Smith
First Coast News

JACKSONVILLE, FL -- A school bus driver from the First Coast is facing criminal charges.

Investigators say Jean Jones was drugged up and driving children.

Witnesses report seeing Jones' bus weaving through lanes while heading down I-10. The bus exited and turned onto Cahoon road.

Moments later, the bus crashed into a fire hydrant at Ramona Boulevard.

The children were all physically okay, but very shaken. And they weren't the only ones.

First Coast News spoke with a woman who watched it all unfold -- and she ended up playing a key role. It didn't take Star Lewis long to realize the driver was under the influence of something.

In the end, the driver claimed she was having a diabetic attack. But she ended up being arrested for driving under the influence.

Lewis drove up behind the bus packed with kids going 30 in a 55 mile an hour zone. She says she wanted to pass, but couldn't.

"I thought the bus was trying to make lane changes, but there was no turn signal on," said Lewis.

The driver, Jean Jones, was swerving in and out of lanes along I-10.

"I saw that the bus was continuing to go into the far left emergency lane and the far right emergency lane, and at that point I picked up my cell phone and called 911," said Lewis.

While on the phone, things got worse as both made the exit to Marietta.

"It stopped at the entrance to the off-ramp and just sat there. When it made a left hand turn, it went up into the grassy median toward the gas station," said Lewis.

Lewis says she was shocked Jones was still going.

"I was still behind her on the phone and when she went to make a turn, she ran into and over on top of the fire hydrant. And that's what stopped her," said Lewis.

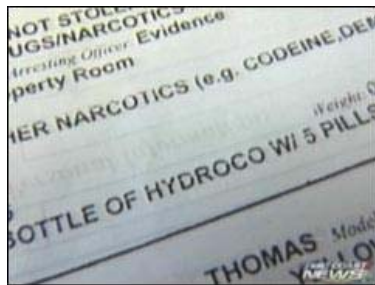
Jones finally got off the bus.

"She was sitting there on the ground, basically out of it. Her eyes were barely open, she was sitting there rocking on the ground," said Lewis.

Jones was found with a bottle of Hydrocodone and arrested.

Jones was suspended from her job at the Durham School Services company. The company says they will make the decision on whether to fire her when the drug tests come back. They say prior to this, she had a clean driving record, and police say she has no local criminal record.

That particular bus carries children from James Welden Johnson and Darnell Cookman middle schools.



Star Lewis



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