

The News Tribune

Bail raised for woman charged in fatal accident

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A Kennewick woman charged in a fatal crash last year had her bail increased to \$200,000 because of substance abuse concerns while she was out of custody.

Lori Ann Christensen, 48, has been in the Franklin County jail awaiting her Sept. 21 trial since she was surrendered Aug. 22 by a bail bondsman.

She is charged in Franklin County Superior Court with vehicular homicide, alleging that she was under the influence when she drove in a reckless manner, killing Orlando Abarca-Rivera.

It was initially believed that her bond was pulled because Christensen had made statements that she was going to leave town before trial.

Lawyer Bob Thompson said after further investigation, he learned that his client's mother had concerns for Christensen's safety, particularly with alcohol or drugs. Yet there's nothing to back up those claims, said Thompson, noting that Christensen has worn an alcohol-monitoring bracelet and been subject to random urine testing.

The \$100,000 bail amount "is just plenty," he argued, especially since Christensen has no resources to bond out.

But Deputy Prosecutor Brian Hultgrenn, in asking for \$250,000 bail, said the bondsman felt Christensen was a flight risk on a serious homicide case. He also noted that she has an "extensive criminal history" with drugs and no longer has the financial backing of her mother.

Christensen was behind the wheel of a car early Sept. 24 when it slammed head-on into another car. She had just pulled out of a Motel 6 parking lot onto Oregon Avenue and crossed the center line, according to police and court documents.

Abarca-Rivera, 35, of Pasco, died in the 5:30 a.m. crash.

Christensen told police that she'd had a couple of beers the night before, and a firefighter at the scene reported smelling alcohol on her, documents said.

Christensen was reportedly late for work delivering newspapers for her husband, who was an independent contractor for the Tri-City Herald.

Reduced bail OK'd in shooting after self-defense claim

A judge agreed to lower a 29-year-old man's bail by \$100,000 after his lawyer said they've got a self-defense argument for the shooting outside a west Pasco home.

Peter Xayasounthone of Pasco is now behind bars on \$150,000 bail. He'd been held on \$250,000 since his Aug. 13 arrest.

Attorney Bob Thompson argued that his client was trying to protect a friend's home and wasn't necessarily firing at a vehicle containing the victim, who was with a group that vandalized a car for being kicked out of the house party.

Javier Casas, 18, was shot once in the shoulder and treated at Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland.

Thompson acknowledged that bail was important, but said \$25,000 was more appropriate for his client – a lifelong Tri-Cities man who has been staying with family.

Deputy Prosecutor Brian Hultgrenn had asked the judge to keep the bail at \$250,000, pointing out that Xayasounthone has several convictions for assault and eluding police, along with 20 failures to appear in court since 2005.

Judge Cameron Mitchell, in agreeing to lower the bail amount, said the failures to appear "are pretty

egregious in this case."

Xayasounthone is charged with first-degree assault. His trial is Oct. 12.

According to court documents, Xayasounthone was at a party in the 7900 block of Savary Drive when a group of uninvited guests showed up about 4 a.m. A fight started when the group was told to leave and the party crashers then began damaging a car parked at the house, documents said.

The car's windows were broken out and the side mirrors knocked off.

The vandals then got in a car to leave, and Xayasounthone allegedly fired several shots at it. Casas of Richland was a passenger in the fleeing car, court documents said.

A search of the home turned up a .357 Ruger revolver, believed used in the shooting, and five spent casings, documents said.

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