

AGGRAVATED VEHICULAR ASSAULT
(BAC .18 and Serious Physical Injury)
Penal Law § 120.04-a (1)
(Committed on or after Nov. 1, 2007)

The (specify) count is Aggravated Vehicular Assault.

Under our law, a person is guilty of Aggravated Vehicular Assault when he or she engages in Reckless Driving¹ and commits the crime of Vehicular Assault in the Second Degree² and does so³ while operating a motor vehicle while he or she has .18 of one per centum or more by weight of alcohol in his or her blood as shown by chemical analysis of his or her blood, breath, urine or saliva.⁴

The following terms used in that definition have a special meaning:

A person ENGAGES IN RECKLESS DRIVING when that person drives or uses any motor vehicle,⁵ in a manner which unreasonably interferes with the free and proper use of a public

¹ At this point, the statute continues: "as defined by section twelve hundred twelve of the vehicle and traffic law." That definition is utilized in this charge in the definition of "reckless driving."

² At this point, the statute continues: "as defined in section 120.03 of this article."

³ The "and does so" is substituted for the statutory language of: "and commits such crimes." The reference to "crimes" in the context of this statute is not correct. While "reckless driving" is a crime, the statute does not recite that the offender must commit the "crime" of "reckless driving"; rather, the statute recites that the offender must "engage" in "reckless driving."

⁴ At this point, the statute continues "made pursuant to the provisions of section eleven hundred ninety-four of the vehicle and traffic law."

⁵ At this point, the statute continues: "motorcycle or any other vehicle propelled by any power other than a muscular power or any appliance or accessory thereof." (*Vehicle & Traffic Law § 1212*). Such language has been omitted here due to the all encompassing term "motor vehicle." The additional statutory language should, however, be inserted if that type of vehicle is at issue.

highway, road, street, or avenue, or unreasonably endangers users of a public highway, road, street, or avenue.⁶

Intoxication, absent more, does not establish reckless driving. One can engage in reckless driving without being intoxicated and, conversely, one can drive while intoxicated without engaging in reckless driving. Evidence of an individual's intoxication and how that condition may have affected his or her ability to perceive and react to risks commonly encountered while operating a motor vehicle on a public highway may be considered in determining whether a person was engaged in reckless driving when that evidence is coupled with evidence of the manner in which the motor vehicle was being operated.⁷

A person commits the crime of VEHICULAR ASSAULT IN THE SECOND DEGREE when he or she⁸ operates a motor vehicle⁹ while he or she has .08 of one per centum or more by

⁶ The term "public highway," used twice in the definition of "reckless driving," is separately defined to include "[a]ny highway, road, street, avenue, alley, public place, public driveway or any other public way." Vehicle and Traffic Law § 134. Instead of separately defining that term, the most common types of "public highway" (road, street, or avenue) have been incorporated directly into the definition of "reckless driving." Of course, if one of the omitted types of "public highway" is in issue, that type of "public highway" should be added.

⁷ *People v Goldblatt*, 98 AD3d 817 (3d Dept 2012).

⁸ At this point the statute states "causes serious physical injury to another...." That portion is omitted here because that language is repeated at the end of the statute where it makes more sense. Thus, to avoid redundancy and for clarity, this charge utilizes the reference to serious physical injury at the end of the statute.

⁹ At this point, the statute states: "in violation of subdivision two, three, four or four-a of section eleven hundred ninety-two of the vehicle and traffic law or operates a vessel or public vessel in violation of paragraph (b), (c), (d) or (e) of subdivision two of section forty-nine-a of the navigation law." Given that the instant crime, "Aggravated Vehicular Assault, requires that the defendant have an alcohol reading of .18, this charge inserts here only the operative language of subdivision two of VTL 1192 which requires a reading of .08.

weight of alcohol in his or her blood as shown by chemical analysis of his or her blood, breath, urine or saliva;¹⁰ and as a result of such intoxication, operates such motor vehicle in a manner that causes serious physical injury to another person.

SERIOUS PHYSICAL INJURY means impairment of a person's physical condition which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes death or serious and protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment of health, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ.¹¹

[Note: if a separate instruction to the jury was given for the applicable VTL 1192 offense incorporate it here by reference; otherwise select applicable portions and insert here.]

Under our law, if the People prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant was operating a motor vehicle, while unlawfully intoxicated or impaired by the use of alcohol [or a drug, or by the combined influence of drugs or of alcohol and any drug or drugs], and while doing so caused serious physical injury to another person, then you may, but are not required to, infer that, as a result of such intoxication or impairment, such person operated the motor vehicle in a manner that caused such serious physical injury to another person.¹²

In order for you to find the defendant guilty of this crime, the People are required to prove, from all of the evidence in the case, beyond a reasonable doubt, each of the following three elements:

¹⁰ Vehicle & Traffic Law § 1192 (2).

¹¹ See Penal Law § 10.00 (10).

¹² The Legislative Memorandum in support of this statute states that “the addition of the rebuttable presumption provision would create a causal link between a driver who causes serious physical injury or death and a presumption that it was his or her intoxication or impairment that was the cause of such serious physical injury or death.” See *People v Mojica*, 62 AD3d 100 (2d Dept 2009), lv denied 12 NY3d 856 (2009).

1. That on or about (date), in the county of (County) the defendant, (defendant's name), engaged in reckless driving of a motor vehicle; and
2. That the defendant did so while he/she had .18 of one per centum or more by weight of alcohol in his/her blood as shown by chemical analysis of his or her blood, breath, urine or saliva; and
3. That as a result of such intoxication, the defendant operated such motor vehicle in a manner that caused serious physical injury to (specify).

If you find the People have proven beyond a reasonable doubt each of those elements, you must find the defendant guilty of this crime.

If you find the People have not proven beyond a reasonable doubt any one or more of those elements, you must find the defendant not guilty of this crime.