

Tourist and taxi driver injured in crash

A French tourist and a Waiheke taxi driver were injured in a head-on collision on Gordons Road last Friday. Emergency services were called just before 3.30pm after the French visitor's camper van hit a Wai Not Taxi cab driving in the opposite direction. A St John Ambulance spokeswoman says ambulance crews took two people to hospital with moderate injuries.

Gordons Road resident Lisa Thomas spotted the crash as she was coming out of her driveway and stopped to help. She says the French woman spoke little or no English, but Lisa knew French, so she acted as a translator between the tourist and emergency service crews while they worked to get her free of the camper van and check her injuries. "I just tried to keep her calm, because she was very upset and worried. She had no idea if she'd have to pay for the ambulance, and everything else, or if she was going to be arrested."

A Wai Not Taxicab spokeswoman says the driver is recovering from his injuries, including fractured ribs and head injuries, but was more concerned for the French woman's well-being while he was in hospital. The spokeswoman for the taxi company says the tourist was apparently driving on the wrong side of the road when they crashed, and it highlights a concern the company has had for a while now. Wai Not taxi drivers feel like they are seeing more people driving on the wrong side of the road this summer, particularly on roads to popular visitor spots such as Gordons Road. The Wai Not spokeswoman says the company hopes this crash will be a reminder for visitors and residents alike to be extra careful about their position on the island's unmarked roads. The company



A Wai Not Taxi driver and a French tourist were injured after her camper van hit his cab head on Gordons Road last Friday.

would also like to see measures like arrows painted on the road along popular visitor routes to help international travellers keep things straight.

Police Sergeant Marty Felton says while some international drivers do go on the wrong side of the road from habit now and again, it's not common - and mostly happens on quiet roads. "From my own experience driving overseas, when you're in traffic it's not much of a problem because it's hard to forget which side of the road to drive on then."

Sergeant Felton says police also want to remind drivers to watch their speed, since there were a few nasty crashes caused by people going too fast over the past week. "Nobody was injured [in these crashes], but that was just luck." One example was a car that hit a power pole on Causeway Road.

Sergeant Felton says if the driver had hit the pole straight on at the speed he was going he could have been seriously injured or killed. "Lucky for him, it was just a glancing blow."

In other news, Waiheke police are investigating the theft of two inflatable dinghies from Mātiatia on Thursday 19 January. Sergeant Felton says inflatable dinghies are pretty valuable, and easy to pick up and carry off which makes them a prime target for thieves. The more expensive dinghy, worth \$4000, was locked up and chained to a rack near Mātiatia wharf and police are reviewing CCTV footage to try and identify the boat bandit. The second boat, worth \$1500, was stolen at around the same time from a little further up the beach - so it was pretty likely to be the same thieves in both cases, Sergeant Felton says.

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