

# R.I. limo proprietor stalled for lacking proper insurance

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by Pat Healy  
*InsuranceTimes*

PROVIDENCE — Douglas Cox, owner of several Rhode Island limousine services, turned himself into the Rhode Island State Police last week on charges of operating a public motor vehicle without a certificate.

Cox, whose limousines were stopped by an undercover officer the weekend after Thanksgiving in a sting operation, had been carrying less than the state-required \$1.5 million worth of insurance for each car in his fleet.

Terry Mercer, spokesperson for the RI Division of Public Utilities and Carriers went in front of local news cameras during the weekend to alert people that the companies operated by Cox would stop providing service immediately.

"I received a number of calls from brides-to-be who had hired his services and had seen the report on the news, wondering what to do," said Mercer.

Attorney Kevin J. Bristow, who represents Cox individually, said his client was being portrayed falsely in public.

"He was portrayed as an individual who owned five or six companies, and for the timeframe we're looking at, he had four cars on the road," he said.

Bristow did allow that the fact that Cox did not have proper insurance may hurt his case.

"Of course there are issues that are not great from his standpoint," he said.

A pre-trial conference will take place on Dec. 19 at Rhode Island State Sixth Division District Court. Mercer said although violations of the licensing law are a misdemeanor punishable by a year in jail or a \$1,000 fine for each illegal trip, this is just a blueprint for sentencing.

"We haven't decided yet how we will proceed, or if we will proceed at all," he said. "Our biggest concern was to have him discontinue offering for-hire services. This was certainly not an outfit we would like to see remaining in operation."

Cox himself declined to comment, referring all questions to Bristow.

"The bottom line is that he was a sole proprietor and he was trying to expand and he just got overwhelmed," said Bristow.

Mercer would not let the seriousness of Cox's offense be undermined.

"All it would take would be for one Freshman Frolic full of 14 to 15 year olds to run off the road with an uninsured driver, and the next thing you know somebody is killed and there is no insurance to cover it," he said.

The limousine companies that may not do business until further notice are A-1, Abe Lincoln, Grace Limo, AAAA Allison's, Antique, Chariot, EG Knight, and Symphony. □