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## Bergen County employee drove county truck with suspended license, records show

**Keldy Ortiz**, North Jersey Record    Published 6:02 p.m. ET Feb. 28, 2019 | Updated 6:16 p.m. ET Feb. 28, 2019

When a seasonal Bergen County park employee from Emerson got behind the wheel of a county-owned dump truck in Ridgewood in late January and crashed into 11 vehicles (</story/news/crime/2019/01/30/bergen-county-nj-employee-crashed-into-10-vehicles-while-drunk-ridgewood/2728231002/>), he did so with a suspended license, according to his driving records.

Daniel Brancato was issued a summons in Oradell for reckless driving on Kinderkamack Road on Dec. 20, 2018, according to a copy of his summons, which was obtained through the Open Public Records Act. The summons was paid Dec. 21 and he received five points on his license, which was also suspended.

On Jan. 30, when Brancato was arrested following the Ridgewood crash, his license was still suspended, according to records from the state Motor Vehicle Commission.

"On the day in question, the driver had a health issue and Brancato was only supposed to drop the vehicle off at a designated location," said Bergen County spokeswoman Alicia D'Alessandro. "Brancato was hired as a seasonal and driving was not part of his primary responsibilities."

D'Alessandro could not comment on Brancato's job status.

On Jan. 30, Brancato was driving the county-owned truck through the parking garage on East Ridgewood Avenue in Ridgewood, when the top of the truck struck the ceiling of the garage, according to a police report. When debris and water fell, Brancato told police he "panicked" and drove out the garage at about 2:30 p.m.



**A Bergen County owned dump truck is filled with debris after a driver ripped a ceiling of a parking garage in Ridgewood.** (Photo: Boyd A. Loving / Special to NorthJersey.com)

Brancato initially faced charges including driving while intoxicated, but the charges were downgraded to municipal court, where he faces possession a controlled dangerous substance and disorderly persons charges, a court official said.

Brancato's lawyer Charles Shaw did not return a request for comment.

Brancato started working on June 21, 2018, according to public records.

On June 26, 2018, three points were taken off his license after completing a safety driving course, according to his driving records. The point reduction came after a June 2017 incident when Brancato received four points on his license for driving 62 miles per hour in a 40 mph zone along Forest Avenue in Emerson, according to a copy of the summons.

Ridgewood Police at the time of the Jan. 30 incident said the truck caused heavy damage to the ceiling of the parking garage.

Brancato continued and struck 11 vehicles, according to a copy of the police report.

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No one was injured, police said.

When he was caught by police, Brancato had Xanax and marijuana oil, according to the police report. His speech was slurred, authorities said.

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