

Do the photos match the claim?



A simple rearing accident was revealed to be a crash for cash fraud attempt once our engineers looked deeper than just the body kits.



The incident

When one of our customers called their broker and took out a policy to insure their van, little did they know that they'd soon be involved in a crash for cash fraud attempt which subsequently saw the culprit appear in court and be sentenced for their crime.

While our insured was driving, he accidentally went into the rear of another car after it braked very suddenly in front of him. It was a minor accident but they exchanged details. While our insured said that he only saw a couple of small scratches on the other driver's Mercedes, there was some damage to his passenger side headlamp and a small piece of the radiator cover was missing from his van. Neither driver contacted their insurance company at the scene but the other driver did take some photographs. Our customer didn't.

Three weeks later, LV= were contacted with a third-party claim for vehicle damage, replacement car hire cost and for personal injury. An engineer's assessment of the damaged Mercedes showed extensive severe damage. The cost of the damage coupled with the hire costs and injury claim totalled £25,000. So, someone wasn't telling the truth about the accident, but who was it?

Taking a closer look

An assessment of our insured's van showed very little damage, while our own inspection of the Mercedes showed a lot of damage and unusual indentation that appeared very inconsistent with the version of events. It was time to take a closer look.



Red flag

Knowing the other driver had taken pictures at the scene, this should've been an easy one to resolve. But strangely he didn't include the photographs or even mention them during his claim.

Time to call the police

The case was referred to the Insurance Fraud Enforcement Department (IFED) at the City of London Police. Their investigations confirmed the Mercedes driver:

1. deliberately slammed on their brakes so our customer hit him
2. caused additional damage to his car to make sure there was a significant claim to be made as well as making the personal injury claim more believable
3. waited until after the bump to deliberately reverse his car in to a bollard to get convincing damage, hence the unusual pattern of damage highlighted by the inspecting engineer

Detective Constable Kevin Carter, who led the investigation for the Insurance Fraud Enforcement Department (IFED), said:

“ In spite of the glaring evidence presented to <him> which corroborated his guilt, the audacious fraudster maintained during questioning that the damage had been caused during the collision.

He even alleged that the victim <the LV= Customer> was the dishonest party, implying that the van had been repaired in the time between the accident and inspection, as well as suggesting that the engineer reports were fictitious.

It is quite clear that <he> has no issues with incriminating innocent strangers and exploiting the system for his own financial gain, and for that he has been rightfully punished. ”

He received an eighteen-month custodial sentence suspended for two years on each count and proceedings will now start to recover the funds paid.”



Matt Crabtree, Complex & Organised Crime Manager at LV= General Insurance, said:

“This is not the first time he’s tried to pursue what we believe to be fraudulent claims against the industry, so it’s great to finally see justice prevail. Fraudsters working in tandem to create accidents for financial gain are not only irresponsible, but also put innocent members of the public at risk – a crime which is frankly unacceptable. This sentence should serve as a warning to all would-be fraudsters that we will stop at nothing to bring those responsible to justice and will continue to work closely with IFED to achieve this.”

Key learnings

- **A picture is worth a thousand words** - photos must be taken at the scene of your accident. You may feel awkward in doing so, especially if the other driver seems ‘nice’ or even if you feel intimidated by the other driver, who may be angry. You can maybe say “my insurance company told me to take pictures” to soften the blow.
- **Time is critical** - if our customer had taken and sent pictures to their broker or to us at LV=, we’d have been able to investigate the claim much earlier and potentially stopped payments being made. We’d have still proven fraudulent activity, but may have taken less time getting there and also stopped the need to make recoveries of the funds paid.

