

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND
FOR ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**CASE NO.: 2007-CA-003017-O
WRIT NO.: 07-19**

RENE CRUZ,
Petitioner,

v.

**STATE OF FLORIDA, DEPARTMENT
OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR
VEHICLES,**
Respondent.

Petition for Writ of Certiorari
from the Florida Department of
Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles,
Reginald Owes, Hearing Officer.

Stuart I. Hyman, Esquire,
for Petitioner.

Damaris E. Reynolds, Assistant General Counsel,
for Respondent.

Before WHITHEAD, MUNYON, and McDONALD, J.J.

PER CURIAM.

FINAL ORDER GRANTING PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Petitioner Rene Cruz (Petitioner) timely filed this petition seeking certiorari review of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles' (Department) Final Order of License Suspension, sustaining the suspension of his driver's license pursuant to section 322.2615, Florida Statutes. This Court has jurisdiction pursuant to sections 322.2615 and 322.31, Florida Statutes, and Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.030(c)(3).

On December 5, 2006, Deputy Santiago of the Orange County Sheriff's Office observed a vehicle strike a barrier. Upon pulling the vehicle over, Deputy Santiago made contact with the driver of the vehicle, Petitioner, and observed the odor of alcohol emitting from his breath. Deputy Santiago also observed that Petitioner's eyes were red and glassy and his speech was slurred. Based on Petitioner's performance on the field sobriety exercises, Deputy Santiago arrested Petitioner and transported him to the Orange County testing facility. Petitioner agreed to submit to a breath test and gave breath-alcohol samples of .123 and .127. As a result, the Department suspended Petitioner's driving privileges.

Pursuant to section 322.2615(6), Florida Statutes, Petitioner requested a formal review of his license suspension. On February 16, 2007, the hearing officer held a formal review hearing at which Petitioner was represented by counsel. Petitioner moved to invalidate the license suspension on five grounds: (1) that the hearing officer failed to issue subpoenas for Roger Skipper, Laura Barfield, Tanya Shrum, and Kelly Melville; (2) that there was no probable cause to stop Petitioner; (3) that the breath test machine used was unapproved for use in the State of Florida; (4) that the breath test results were illegally coerced; and (5) that there was no probable cause to arrest or require Petitioner to submit to field sobriety exercises. Petitioner also moved to strike the horizontal gaze nystagmus test and any statements made by him due to the accident report privilege. On February 20, 2007, the hearing officer entered an order denying Petitioner's motions and sustaining the suspension of his driver's license finding that the law enforcement officer had probable cause to believe that Petitioner was driving or in actual physical control of a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcoholic beverages or chemical or controlled substances and that he had an unlawful breath-alcohol level of 0.08 or higher.

The Court's review of an administrative agency decision is governed by a three-part standard of review: (1) whether procedural due process was accorded; (2) whether the essential requirements of the law were observed; and (3) whether the decision was supported by competent, substantial evidence. City of Deerfield Beach v. Vaillant, 419 So. 2d 624, 626 (Fla. 1982). "It is neither the function nor the prerogative of a circuit judge to reweigh evidence and make findings [of fact] when [undertaking] a review of a decision of an administrative forum." Dep't of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles v. Allen, 539 So. 2d 20, 21 (Fla. 5th DCA 1989).

In cases where the individual's license is suspended for an unlawful breath-alcohol level, "the hearing officer shall determine by a preponderance of the evidence whether sufficient cause exists to sustain, amend, or invalidate the suspension." § 322.2615(7), Fla. Stat. (2007). The hearing officer's scope of review is limited to the following issues:

1. Whether the law enforcement officer had probable cause to believe that the person whose license was suspended was driving or in actual physical control of a motor vehicle in this state while under the influence of alcoholic beverages or chemical or controlled substances.
2. Whether the person whose license was suspended had an unlawful blood-alcohol level or breath-alcohol level of 0.08 or higher as provided in s. 316.193.

§ 322.2615(7)(a), Fla. Stat. (2007).

At issue in the instant case is whether the hearing officer departed from the essential requirements of the law in interpreting section 322.2615(6)(b) to prohibit the issuance of subpoenas for the agency inspector and other witnesses. Petitioner argues that the hearing officer's failure to issue subpoenas violated his right to full discovery concerning the breath test machine upon which he was tested. He also asserts that the breath test results were inadmissible because the samples were obtained by using an unapproved and unreliable breath testing machine.

With respect to Petitioner's argument regarding the hearing officer's failure to issue subpoenas, the Department asserts that there was no departure from the essential requirements of the law because the hearing officer lacked authority to issue the subpoenas. The Department contends that under section 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, a hearing officer may only issue subpoenas for witnesses identified in the following documents: (1) the driver's license; (2) an affidavit stating the officer's grounds for belief that a driver was under the influence of alcohol; (3) the results of any breath test or an affidavit stating that a breath test was requested by the officer and that person refused to submit; (4) the officer's description of a person's field sobriety test, if any; (5) the notice of suspension; and (6) a copy of the crash report, if any. Because the witnesses at issue are not named in the above described documents, the Department asserts that the hearing officer did not have authority to issue the subpoenas. With respect to Petitioner's other argument, the Department contends that the record evidence entered at the formal review hearing established that the breath test was conducted pursuant to sections 316.1931 and 316.1934, Florida Statutes, and in compliance with FDLE rules.

Following the briefing phase of this appeal, the Department filed a motion to abate and remand for further proceedings citing the Second District's decision in Yankey v. Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, 6 So. 3d 633 (Fla. 2d DCA 2009)(finding that when the department relies upon a document prepared by an agency inspector to properly validate the breath test results, section 322.2615, Florida Statutes, permits the driver to subpoena the inspector identified in that document). The Department's motion to abate is still pending. We find the Yankey decision to be dispositive of the instant case. See Hendeles v. Sanford Auto Auction, Inc., 364 So. 2d 467, 468 (Fla. 1978)(disposition of a case on appeal should be made in

accord with the law in effect at the time of the appellate court’s decision rather than the law in effect at the time the judgment appealed was rendered).

In Yankey, the petitioner filed a petition for writ of certiorari seeking to quash a circuit court order affirming the department’s suspension of her license for driving with an unlawful breath-alcohol level. Id. at 634. The petitioner asserted that the hearing officer and the circuit court departed from the essential requirements of the law in interpreting section 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, to prohibit the department’s issuance of a subpoena for the agency inspector responsible for testing the breath test machine and signing the agency inspection report. Id. Pursuant to section 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, a driver in a formal review hearing “may subpoena those witnesses who are identified in documents submitted by the arresting officer, which documents include the results of any breath test.” Yankey, 6 So. 3d at 637; see also §622.2615(2), Fla. Stat. The Second District acknowledged that law enforcement had established a practice of routinely providing the department with a breath-alcohol analysis report, a breath test affidavit, and an agency inspection report, in order to report the results of the breath test and support the license suspension. Yankey, 6 So. 3d at 637. Based on the statutory and administrative code provisions regarding the procedures to establish the validity of breath test results, the Second District concluded that when an officer suspends a person’s license and “submits breath test results pursuant to section 322.2615(2) that include the breath alcohol analysis report, a breath test affidavit, and an agency inspection report, and those documents identify specific persons, the hearing officer is authorized under section 322.2615(6)(b) to issue a subpoena to any person ‘identified in’ those documents.” Id. at 638.

Below, the Department entered the breath-alcohol test affidavit, the agency inspection report, and the department inspection report into evidence. The witnesses at issue were named in

the documents presented by the Department. Like in Yankey, the hearing officer below refused to issue the subpoenas asserting that section 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, did not authorize him to do so.

Based on the foregoing, the Court finds that the hearing officer was authorized under 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, to issue subpoenas to persons identified in the documents and the hearing officer's failure to do so constituted a departure from the essential requirements of the law. In light of this conclusion, the Court finds it unnecessary to address the additional arguments made by Petitioner and the Department.

Accordingly, it is hereby **ORDERED AND ADJUDGED** that the Petition for Writ of Certiorari is **GRANTED**; the hearing officer's Final Order of License Suspension is **QUASHED**; and the Department's Motion to Abate and Remand, filed March 12, 2009, is **DENIED**.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers, at Orlando, Orange County, Florida on this
_____30____ day of _____November_____, 2009.

_____/S/_____
REGINALD WHITEHEAD
Circuit Judge

_____/S/_____
LISA T. MUNYON
Circuit Judge

_____/S/_____
ROGER J. MCDONALD
Chief Judge

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Order has been furnished via U.S. mail to **Stuart I. Hyman, Esquire**, Stuart I. Hyman, P.A., 1520 East Amelia Street, Orlando, Florida 32803 and **Damaris E. Reynolds, Assistant General Counsel**, DHSMV-Legal Office, Post Office Box 540609, Lake Worth, FL 33454-0609, on the _30 day of November, 2009.

 /S/
Judicial Assistant