

ASSAULT BY AUTO OR VESSEL
(SERIOUS BODILY INJURY - Third Degree)
(N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1c(4))

The defendant (name) is charged in count ____ of the indictment with the crime of assault by [auto] [vessel].

(Read Appropriate Count of Indictment)

The statute upon which this charge is based provides:

Assault by [auto] [vessel] is a crime if the person purposely drives a vehicle in an aggressive manner directed at another vehicle and serious bodily injury results.

In order for you to find the defendant guilty of this crime, the State must prove the following elements beyond a reasonable doubt:

1. That the defendant drove a vehicle;
2. That the defendant drove the vehicle in an aggressive manner directed at another vehicle;
3. That the defendant acted purposely;¹
4. That serious bodily injury resulted.

The first element the State must prove beyond a reasonable doubt is that the defendant drove a vehicle. In this case, the State alleges that the [auto] [vessel] is a vehicle. **(Charge appropriate: An auto is a means of conveyance propelled other wise than by muscular power. A vessel means a means of conveyance for travel on water and propelled otherwise than by muscular power.²)**

The second element the State must prove beyond a reasonable doubt is that the defendant drove the vehicle in an aggressive manner directed at another vehicle. “Driving a vehicle in an aggressive manner” includes, but is not limited to, unexpectedly altering the speed of the vehicle, making improper or erratic traffic lane changes, disregarding traffic control devices, failing to yield

¹ Please note that this statute is specifically limited to purposeful conduct. N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1c(1) is a reckless conduct statute, however, the Model Criminal Jury Charge Committee does not believe that 2C:12-1c(1) is a lesser included offense of this crime.

² Please note that N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1c(4) does not define the term “auto.” It does specifically define the term vessel as just noted in the charge. N.J.S.A. 2C:11-5d, Death by Auto or Vessel, defines both auto or vessel as “all means of conveyance propelled other wise than by muscular power.” It would seem prudent to define auto in this section in compliance with that in N.J.S.A. 2C:11-5d.

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the right of way, or following another vehicle too closely.³

The third element the State must prove beyond a reasonable doubt is that the defendant acted purposely.

A person acts purposely with respect to the nature of his/her conduct or a result of his/her conduct if it is his/her conscious object to engage in conduct of that nature or to cause such a result. A person acts purposely with respect to the attendant circumstances if he/she is aware of the existence of such circumstances or he/she believes or hope that they exist. “With purpose,” “designed,” “with design” or equivalent terms have the same meaning.⁴

Purpose is a state of the mind which cannot be seen, and can only be determined by inference drawn from the defendant’s conduct, words or acts as they have been presented in the evidence you have heard and seen in this case. It is not necessary that the State produce a witness or witnesses to testify that the defendant stated, for example, that it was his/her purpose in driving a vehicle in an aggressive manner directed at another vehicle. His/her purpose may be gathered from his/her acts and conduct, from all that he/she said and did at the particular time and place, and from all the surrounding circumstances reflected in the testimony [and adduced at trial].

The fourth element that the State must prove beyond a reasonable doubt is that serious bodily injury resulted. Serious bodily injury is defined as bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death or which causes serious, permanent disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ.⁵ Bodily injury is defined as physical pain, illness or any impairment of physical condition.⁶ **[If the causation is an issue, charge the following:** In order to find that the defendant caused (name of victim(s))’s injury (or injuries), you must find that (the victim(s)) would not have been injured but for the defendant’s conduct.⁷]

If you find that the State has proven every element of the crime of assault by [auto] [vessel] beyond a reasonable doubt, then you must find the defendant guilty. If you find that the State has

³ N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1c(4).

⁴ N.J.S.A. 2C:2-2b.

⁵ N.J.S.A. 2C:11-1b.

⁶ N.J.S.A. 2C:11-1a.

⁷ N.J.S.A. 2C:2-3a(1). If foreseeable result is an issue, then N.J.S.A. 2C:2-3b should be charged.

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failed to prove any element of this crime beyond a reasonable doubt, then you must find the defendant not guilty of assault by [auto] [vessel].