

TITLE: Defensive Driving as a Prerequisite for Licensing (Assembly Concurrent Resolution 94, Deddeh)

DATE: January 1974

AUTHOR(S): California DMV

REPORT NUMBER: Unnumbered (NRN002)

NTIS NUMBER: PB-267864/AS

FUNDING SOURCE: Departmental Budget

PROTECT OBJECTIVE:

To comply with a legislative resolution requesting DMV to conduct a study relating to the desirability of making completion of a course in defensive driving a requirement for persons seeking to obtain a California driver's license.

SUMMARY:

The study found that New York required a three-hour defensive driving course for first-time licensees unless they had a driver education course or a previous license from another state. In a New York study, these drivers showed a 36% decrease in accidents after this requirement was implemented, but serious methodological limitations make the findings questionable. Unlike the New York first-time licensee population, the vast majority of original California applicants at that time had either had driver education (64%) or had been previously licensed; e.g., in another state (16%). Therefore it was not considered cost-beneficial to try to implement such a program, since it would affect such a small (20% and shrinking) segment of original California applicants. Furthermore, a knowledge of laws and driving skill was required in order to pass California's written and road tests. Finally, there were no conclusive data substantiating reduction of accident rates through short defensive driving classes, and the cost-benefit of such requirements was questionable.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

No legislation establishing such a program or requirement was enacted.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

None.