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TITLE: The Traffic Safety Impact of Driver Improvement Countermeasures Targeting 55-MPH Speed Limit Compliance

DATE: March 1984

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REPORT NUMBER: 91

NTIS NUMBER: PB84-212729

FUNDING SOURCE: Office of Traffic Safety and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

PROTECT OBJECTIVE:

The overall objectives of this study were twofold: (1) to evaluate a speed-oriented home instruction/point reduction incentive program (HI/PRI) and a speed education meeting (SEM) as alternatives to the group educational meeting (GEM) for negligent operators, and (2) to evaluate the effects of a modified speed compliance HI/PRI program on repeat speed offenders.

SUMMARY:

As authorized by Assembly Bill 2505 (1980), the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) implemented and evaluated a pilot driver improvement program involving the withholding ("masking") from public inspection of one conviction from the driving record of qualifying drivers. All drivers in the pilot program were multiple violators subject to driver improvement intervention. To qualify for masking, the driver had to complete and return a mailed self-administered test and remain free of traffic convictions and accidents for a period of 6 months. The "Home Instruction/Point Reduction Incentive" (HI/PRI) countermeasure was developed in different versions for two distinct populations of drivers: the Speed HI/PRI was designed for multiple violators of the 55 Maximum Speed Law (MSL), while the Negligent Operator (Neg-Op) HI/PRI was designed for drivers classified as negligent operators (based on their traffic conviction records). Both HI/PRI countermeasures covered the safety and energy-saving advantages of 55 MSL compliance; the Neg-Op HI/PRI included general traffic safety material as well.

The multiple 55 MSL violators were assigned at random to either the Speed HI/PRI or a no-contact comparison group. The negligent operators were assigned at random to one of four conditions: the Neg-Op HI/PRI, the then-existing group educational meeting conducted at DMV field offices, a modified group meeting incorporating coverage of 55 MSL issues, or a no-contact comparison group.

The Speed HI/PRI and Neg-Op HI/PRI were each estimated to be cost-beneficial on the basis of accidents prevented, the latter definitively so. In addition, the Neg-Op HI/PRI had a larger estimated effect on accidents and lower cost than the group meeting countermeasures, which in themselves were also cost-beneficial. The coverage of 55 MSL issues in the group meeting did not appear to influence its effect at reducing either accidents or convictions. All of the countermeasures appeared to reduce subsequent convictions.

The findings would ordinarily have been regarded as sufficiently positive to recommend implementation of the HI/PRI treatments. However, during the course of the study, the DMV's negligent-operator program was replaced with a new series of countermeasures known as the Negligent Operator Treatment System (NOTS). The new system included expanded entry criteria, such that both the Neg-Op HI/PRI and the Speed HI/PRI populations were encompassed by the NOTS. The DMV evaluates, on an ongoing basis, the effectiveness of the NOTS system in the Negligent Operator Treatment Evaluation System (NOTES). It was considered necessary to await the findings from NOTES before considering implementation of the HI/PRI alternative.

In order to allow for future conviction masking should the HI/PRI prove superior to the NOTS treatments, it was recommended that AB 2505 be extended in modified form to allow such future conviction masking at the discretion of the Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles, with a

termination date of December 1989. If, at that time, the HI/PRI remained the superior countermeasure, it was recommended that the Department should seek legislation authorizing DMV to make the program permanent.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Department initiated legislation to implement the above recommendation, which was subsequently enacted into law. The law sunsetted without the program having been implemented.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

An abbreviated version of this study was published in 1984 by Kadell under the title "The Traffic Safety Impact of Withholding from Public Inspection One Conviction on the Driving Record of Qualifying Drivers (In Accord with Chapter 544, 1980 Regular Legislative Session [Assembly Bill 2505 Calvo])." Two other versions of this study are:

"Traffic Safety Impacts of the Home Instruction/Point Reduction Incentive (HI/PRI) Program," *Journal of Safety Research*, 18(4), 149-178 (Kadell, 1987) and "Traffic Safety Impact of Driver Improvement Countermeasure Targeting 55 MPH Speed Limit Compliance," *Proceedings of the Second Symposium on Traffic Safety Effectiveness (Impact) Evaluation Projects*, Chicago Illinois, (Kadell, June 1985).