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TITLE: An Evaluation of California's "Good Driver" Incentive Program

DATE: January 1974

AUTHOR(S): Richard M. Harano & David M. Hubert

REPORT NUMBER: 46

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PROTECT OBJECTIVE:

To study the effects of rewards and/ or incentives in the form of one-year license extensions (no testing or visit to field office required) for drivers with one-year-clean prior records.

SUMMARY:

Extensions produced no reliable effect on convictions, and opposite effects on collisions for "reward" and "incentive" conditions.

Drivers who were free of collisions and convictions over the year preceding license expiration were sent a letter notifying them of a one-year license extension issued as a "reward" for this accomplishment. They were also told that at the end of the following year, should their records again be clean, they would be recontacted and given a second extension. The results of this reward program indicated no reliable effect on subsequent traffic convictions, and various detrimental effects on subsequent collisions, for drivers in the program as compared to uncontacted controls. The detrimental effects were not significant for drivers whose prior records were clean for three entire years, suggesting that a one-year period was not a sufficient barometer of a person's driving.

Drivers having one or more prior entries were involved in an incentive program. These drivers were sent a letter describing their eligibility for a one-year license extension, which would be granted provided that their records remained free of collisions and convictions over the subsequent year. The results of this incentive program indicated no significant effects on subsequent convictions but various beneficial effects on subsequent collisions for drivers in the program, as compared to controls.

It was recommended that a driver improvement program be established on an experimental basis, in which drivers with prior entries would be involved in an ongoing incentive program in conjunction with a group educational meeting. At the meeting, appropriate behaviors could be identified and rehearsed. The incentive (an extension, a reduction in point count, or some other pre-identified reinforcer) would be expected to increase the future likelihood of the newly learned behaviors. A program of this kind, concentrating on marginally deviant drivers, would have had the advantage of reaching a much larger number of drivers than the driver improvement methods in use at that time.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The department decided not to implement the incentive program, but concluded that efforts and research devoted to developing effective strategies should continue.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The study influenced the development of Assembly Bills 583 and 777 (Calvo), passed in 1978 and 1979, respectively. AB 583 made it possible for the department to extend, for two years, the licenses of up to 10% of the driving population with clean four-year prior records. AB 777 authorized a four-year driver license extension (essentially equivalent to a renewal by mail) for drivers under age 70 with clean four-year prior records. Later legislation (Speraw) provided for up to two consecutive renewals by mail for drivers under 70 with dean two-year prior records. The Robbins bill then allowed one non-responsible accident in the two-year period. (See Kelsey et al., Report #93, and Janke, Reports #118 and #101.) For incentive studies, see Marsh, Report #66, and Kadell, Report #91.