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TITLE: Driving Record and Recidivism Following the Purging of Driver Control Action Files

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PROTECT OBTECTIVE:

To evaluate adequacy of the department's driver action purge policies by analyzing the subsequent driving record of subjects whose files had been previously purged.

SUMMARY:

This report points out that the Department destroys legal files and action histories that are inactive. Legal files and action histories usually indicate a deviant driving record or some condition affecting a driver's ability to drive safely. The criteria (e.g., length of inactivity, type of file, etc.) for determining purgeability have varied over the years, generally becoming more liberal. Consequently, the Department destroyed files in 1976 after a much shorter interval of inactivity than it did in earlier years. The criteria for purgeability were largely intuitive and were also dictated by practical limitations on the amount of information that can be economically retained.

The study described in this report analyzed samples of files that were purged in the mid-1960's of 1959-61 data. The post-purge driving records and DMV action histories were tabulated to determine recidivism and accidents. Drivers with legal files and action histories were compared to a sample of renewal applicants to determine if driving records of the former group deviated from those of an average sample of California drivers. An analysis of subsequent driving records showed that "legal-file" drivers had somewhat higher rates of accidents and convictions than were found for the renewal applicants. The legal-file drivers also had a higher rate of subsequent departmental actions than the average for California drivers. As expected, the legal-file sample had substantially improved subsequent driving records, compared to their own prior records.

It was concluded that the subsequent driving records of the legal-file (purged) group were not deviant enough to necessitate more stringent purge criteria. However, the report points out that trends toward higher-than-average recidivism indicated that then-current purge criteria should not be relaxed.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report was used in the process of making changes in the Department's purge criteria.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

None available.