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TITLE: The Effects of "No Action" Negligent Operator Hearings as an Alternative to Hearings Resulting in Probation

DATE: June 1979

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PROTECT OBTECTIVE:

To evaluate the effectiveness of negligent operator hearings in which probation is replaced by the imposition of "no action."

SUMMARY:

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of negligent operator hearings in which probation is replaced by the imposition of "no action." The sample consisted of 6,489 drivers who attended negligent operator hearings. Of these drivers, 1,247 (19%) were considered high risk and were screened from the no-action hearing program. The remaining 5,242 drivers were randomly assigned to either the group that received license status action as recommended (standard treatment) or the group that had no action taken on their licenses (experimental treatment).

The results indicated that no statistically significant driver record differences existed between the randomly assigned groups, either 12 months prior, or 12 months subsequent, to treatment. However, the possibility that removal of departmental actions from the individual hearing setting may have had a detrimental effect could not be entirely dismissed. It was noted that the societal savings associated with the observed (nonsignificant) decrease in fatal and injury accidents, for those drivers not receiving actions, might result in a positive net financial impact for an implemented no-action program.

The high-risk group was examined in an attempt to determine if the high-risk screening criteria used in the study were valid. An analysis of the characteristics of the nonhigh- and high-risk groups suggested that the high-risk group did not, in fact, have a higher accident expectancy than the nonhigh-risk group.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The results of this study were released simultaneously with the results of the probation-by-mail study (Sherman & Ratz, Report #70). Together, they examined two logically complementary alternatives to the individual-hearing process. Since neither of the alternatives appeared to be detrimental in terms of traffic safety, and the probation-by-mail alternative offered greater immediate departmental cost savings, it was recommended that probation-by-mail (PBM) be implemented rather than the no-action hearing. PBM was implemented statewide in July 1979. In 1982, evidence of declining effectiveness led to its abandonment.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

See Sherman and Ratz, Report #70.