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Department of Motor Vehicles
Research and Development Branch
2570 24th Street, MS H-126
Sacramento, CA 95818-2606
(916) 657-5805

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TITLE: An Evaluation of the Alcohol Reexamination Program for Drivers with Two Major Traffic Convictions

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AUTHOR(S): Daniel J. Kadell & Raymond C. Peck

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PROTECT OBJECTIVE:

To evaluate the traffic safety impact of a reexamination designed to detect and treat drunk driving among drivers with two "major violations" who have escaped license sanctions and other countermeasures. Major violations comprise the more serious traffic violations including reckless driving, hit-and-run, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI).

SUMMARY:

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a reexamination for drivers who accumulate two major violations within a 3-year period, but who were not otherwise treated by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Because major violations often involve alcohol even when the conviction is for a non-DUI offense, the reexamination was designed to evaluate the role of alcohol and to deter subsequent impaired driving through tailored license control actions.

The sample of 12,000 drivers was randomly divided into reexamination and control (no reexamination) groups.

Results indicated that the information gathered at the reexamination was moderately predictive of subsequent alcohol-involved violations, slightly more so than driving record information alone. Among drivers attending the reexamination, the two most frequent outcomes were no action and license probation; license suspension or revocation was rarely used. A substantial reduction in traffic convictions was attributable to the reexamination. The reexamination group had a lower rate of injury accidents and total accidents, but this latter difference did not reach statistical significance. There was no evidence that the effect of treatment was greater on alcohol-related accidents or convictions than on those not obviously alcohol-related. Based on the sample estimate of accidents prevented, the reexamination was projected to be more likely cost-beneficial than not.

Comparisons of drivers for whom no action, probation, or suspension was imposed suggested that license suspension would be a more effective countermeasure than the license probation commonly used in the reexamination. Regarding the diagnostic function of the reexamination, those major convictions without evidence of alcohol involvement were associated with as high an accident risk level as were majors with evidence of alcohol involvement. This equivalence of risk levels was seen as an argument for a blanket countermeasure program rather than for countermeasures tailored on the basis of a diagnosis of alcohol involvement.

It was recommended that mandatory license suspension be used in place of the reexamination for drivers with two major convictions, regardless of alcohol involvement.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendation to seek legislation for mandatory license suspension authority was largely accomplished with implementation of the administrative per se law (SB 1623, Lockyer) in July 1990.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A summary of the study is also contained in *Proceedings on the Third Annual Symposium on Traffic Safety Effectiveness (Impact) Evaluation Projects*, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and National Safety Council, Chicago, Illinois, May 16-18, 1983.