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TITLE: Traffic Safety Impact of the Extension of Driver Licenses by Mail for Renewal Applicants with Clean Prior Driving Records

DATE: December 1981

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REPORT NUMBER: 80

NTIS NUMBER: PB82-209198

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

PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

To evaluate the traffic safety impact of extending driver licenses by mail for drivers with clean prior four-year records.

SUMMARY:

Drivers under the age of 70, whose prior 4-year accident and conviction records showed no entries when examined two months prior to the date of their driver license expiration, were randomly assigned either to a group required to renew their licenses in the standard manner or to a group offered the opportunity to receive a four-year license extension by mail (AB 777, Calvo II). A related study (AB 583, Calvo I) involved comparing clean-record drivers of any age, offered two-year extensions, with a group required to renew in person.

There was no evidence that extending licenses by mail affected accidents or convictions during the period 18 months subsequent to the date on which renewal or extension notices were sent. This was true for the driver group as a whole and for all subgroups, with two exceptions. In the four-year extension program, extended drivers under 30 showed a significant conviction increase; however, since this effect was not found in the two-year extension program, there was a substantial likelihood that it was due to chance. Drivers 70 years of age and older were excluded from the four-year extension program, but among two-year extension group drivers, those over 69 had significantly fewer accidents than their counterparts in the regular renewal group.

A subgroup of drivers who were offered extensions because their records were clean at the time of selection, but who were later found to have had an accident or a traffic citation prior to selection (which failed to appear on the record at selection due to the time lag between occurrence of an incident and record update) also showed no evidence of an effect due to the extension program. The two-year extension evaluation showed similar results.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The program offering four-year extensions to drivers under age 70 superseded the two-year extension program, which was discontinued. Exclusion of drivers aged 70 or above from the extension program was implemented on the basis of considerations other than demonstrated traffic safety effect; as noted above, older drivers in the extension program had better records than their controls.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Janke, M. K., & Kelsey, S. L. Traffic safety impact of the extension of driver licenses by mail for renewal applicants with clean prior driving records. *Proceedings of the Second Symposium on Traffic Safety Effectiveness (Impact) Evaluation Projects*. Fredericksburg, V A: May 1982. Presentation at the *Western Psychological Association Annual Conference*, Sacramento, CA: April 1982. Kelsey, S. L., & Janke, M. K. (1983). Driver license renewal by mail in California. *Journal of Safety Research*, 14(2), 65-82. This study reported results of an 18-month follow-up. See Kelsey et al., Report #93 for a 4-year follow-up.