Traffic Tech

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POTENTIAL LIVES SAVED IF ADMINISTRATIVE LICENSE REVOCATION LAW ADOPTED

Administrative license revocation (ALR) laws allow police and State driver licensing officials to revoke or suspend the driver's license of drivers who fail or refuse a chemical test for alcohol. These laws give authority to the police to take a driver's license on-the-spot at the time of arrest for driving while intoxicated, and the licensing authority to complete the suspension/revocation process without the usual long delays experienced while waiting for a criminal trial. ALR laws include an appeal process that protects the driver's right to due process. ALR laws have already proven to be cost-beneficial [1]. To date, 29 States plus DC have adopted some form of ALR law.

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) sponsored study in 1989 [2] evaluated the effectiveness of ALR in 17 States (CO, IL, IN, IA, LA, ME, MN, MS, MO, NV, NM, NC, OK, OR, UT, WV, WY) which had the law in effect for at least two years. A time series/intervention analysis revealed that 6 States exhibited a statistically significant reduction in the rate of driver fatal crash alcohol involvement (IL, ME, NC, CO, NM, UT) after ALR was adopted with the estimated reductions ranging from 6% to 30%. For the group of 17 States as a whole, there was a median 6% decrease. "Driver fatal crash alcohol involvement" was defined as the rate of single-vehicle nighttime (8 p.m. to 4 a.m.) fatal crash driver involvements per 100 fatal crash involvements. Single vehicle nighttime fatal crashes have been widely used as a surrogate measure for the prevalence of alcohol in fatal crashes.

In this Traffic Tech, we estimate the potential lives saved if ALR laws were adopted in the 21 States without them. Virginia, for example, is a State that does not presently have an ALR law. In 1989, Virginia experienced 1004 traffic fatalities, 289 of which occurred in single vehicle nighttime crashes. If Virginia had adopted ALR before 1989, they could have expected, on the average, a 6% reduction in those single vehicle nighttime fatalities. This translates to an estimated 17 lives that could have potentially been saved if ALR were adopted . Lives saved for all 21 States which presently do not have an ALR law are shown in the following table. If all 21 States had adopted such a law, an estimated 346 additional lives could have been saved in 1989. This is considered as a conservative estimate since the effects of an ALR law were only measured on single-vehicle nighttime crashes and not on other potential alcohol related crashes. If ALR has an effect on these other alcohol related crash types, then the number of lives that could be saved through the adoption of ALR would be even greater.

TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN STATES WITHOUT ALR - 1989

STATE	TOTAL TRAFFIC FATALITIES	FATALITIES IN SINGLE-VEHICLE NIGHTTIME CRASHES	POTENTIAL LIVES SAVED IF ALR ADOPTED
Alabama	1029	247	15
Arkansas	647	160	10
Georgia	1632	420	25
Idaho	238	62	4
Kentucky	772	182	11
Massachusetts	700	216	13
Michigan	1631	414	25
Montana	181	53	3
Nebraska	296	55	3
New Hampshire	187	56	3
New Jersey	891	225	14
New York	2257	577	35
Ohio	1772	474	28
Pennsylvania	1877	520	31
Rhode Island	100	30	2
S. Carolina	996	258	15
S. Dakota	152	44	3
Tennessee	1088	284	17
Texas	3357	989	59
Virginia	1004	289	17
Washington	781	215	13
	21588	5770	346

TOTAL POTENTIAL LIVES SAVED IN SINGLE-VEHICLE NIGHTTIME CRASHES IF ALR ADOPTED IN 21 STATES: 346

[1] Lacey, John H., Jones, Ralph., Stewart, J. Richard, "Cost-Benefit Analysis of Administrative License Suspension", NHTSA Contract #DTNH22-88-07310, January 1991, in press.

[2] Klein, Terry M. "Changes in Alcohol-Involved Fatal Crashes Associated with Tougher State Alcohol Legislation," Sigmastat, Inc., NHTSA Report # DOT HS 807-511, July 1989.

For additional information on this subject, contact: James C. Fell, Office of Alcohol and State Programs, NTS-20, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590.

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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

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