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New Jersey Department of Transportation
Bureau of Research

Technical Brief



Review of NJ Point System

The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) currently monitors driving behavior by means of a “demerit” point system and employs a system of progressively harsh sanctions to address problem driving behavior. The point system has been in effect since March 1, 1977. Studies have found the system to be effective however; since 2000, the widespread practice of plea bargaining point-carrying motor vehicle violations to zero-point offenses has diverted tens of thousands of problem drivers out of the sanctioning program.

Background

The MVC Plea Bargaining Study completed in 2009 found that since July 2000 the rate of plea bargaining point-carrying moving violations to zero-point offenses has increased 250 percent. This pattern appears to present clear evidence that the creation of the “unsafe operation” moving violation in 2000 encouraged the practice of plea bargaining point-carrying moving violations to no-point offenses. The study also found that over the same period, the number of drivers subjected to MVC negligent driver countermeasures declined by 36 percent. At the same time, the MVC Recidivism Study completed in 2009 concluded that “the countermeasures used by MVC to address negligent driving behavior are effective at reducing violation and crash recidivism among most negligent drivers.” The combined results of these two studies suggest that changes to the MVC’s current point-based monitoring system could enhance the MVC’s ability to intercede to address problem drivers.

Research Objectives and Approach

- Explore alternatives to MVC’s current point-based driver monitoring system.
- Identify what changes (if any) can be made to the existing point system and driver management and control program to enhance the MVC’s ability to address negligent driving behavior and thereby improve highway safety.



Findings & Conclusions

- MVC's point advisory notices, driver re-education classes and point license suspensions are effective in reducing crash or violation incidence and increasing periods of safe driving (i.e., the elapsed time between offenses after intervention when compared to before).
- All three alternative systems investigated as part of this study increase the number of drivers subject to intervention and thereby improve safety conditions. However, each alternative poses significant challenges to implementation.

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A final report is available online at: <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/refdata/research/>
If you would like a copy of the full report, send an e-mail to: Research.Bureau@dot.state.nj.us

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