

Events instigating driver referral for competency testing: Implications for improving licence review systems

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Abstract

VicRoads relies on community referrals to initiate the process of managing potentially at-risk drivers. The majority of drivers reported for licence review are referred by police after an instigating event. Event characteristics should be understood in order to improve countermeasures and review systems. Little is currently known about police referred drivers and their aberrant driving behaviours. Researchers sought to understand police information about instigating events and the characteristics of a sample of drivers referred for a licence review. A retrospective data mining methodology was applied to a sample of active de-identified driver files. Data were examined using descriptive and chi-squared analyses. Police referrals (n=141) were extracted from 131 files and reviewed (some files had >1 referral). Average driver age was 76 years and 92% had one or more medical conditions. The majority of requests (n=133) described instigating events like poor driving (80%) or crashes (20%); many occurred within intersections (37%) or car parks (20%). Inappropriate/dangerous driving (62%) and road law non-compliance (47%) were common. Licence review resulted in cancellation/suspension for 46% of drivers: driving privilege withdrawal was associated with increasing age, certain medical conditions, and initial inappropriate driver behaviour referral information. Licence review systems rely on referrals from police to identify individuals with declining driver skills. These results highlight the (a) nature of events that trigger a review request, (b) predisposing factors that might act as “red flags”, and (c) police and community education needs related to managing declining driving competency.