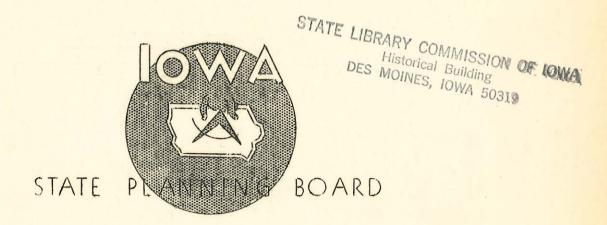
Betate Planning Board Study

A STUDY OF DRIVERS IN MAJOR ACCIDENTS
September, 1935 - April, 1936



By:

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COMMITTEE ON

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The highway accident situation is becoming recognized as one of the major problems of the day. The great social and economic loss is well known. We have passed the "and Sudden Death" phase of the campaign - everyone has become sufficiently awakened to the dangers of highway travel - future work must be devoted to determining the causes of accidents and devising means of eliminating these causes.

The Iowa State Planning Board is eager to cooperate in any concerted movement dedicated to reducing highway accidents such as the program which the recently organized State Safety Council is sponsoring. An intelligent approach to the solution of the accident problem is through the analysis of adequate accident reports. To that end this preliminary study of the drivers involved in major accidents is presented.

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A STUDY OF DRIVERS IN MAJOR ACCIDENTS

The human factor in accidents has always been great, and it long has been apparent that much must be done in both education and enforcement before marked improvement may be expected in our accident record. Educational programs have been directed at Iowa motor vehicle drivers for some time, but the enactment of a strict Driver's License Law last year was the first official move to reduce accidents by taking the dangerous driver off the road.

This preliminary study of the drivers involved in major accidents in Iowa and their subsequent examination was undertaken by the State Planning Board at the suggestion of the State Motor Vehicle Department. All personal injury and fatal accidents, and those property damage accidents of such serious nature as to indicate the suspension or revocation of the driver's license, occurring in the State from September, 1935 to April, 1936 are included. The 1,209 accidents studied represent only twenty per cent of the accidents of all types that occurred in Iowa during this time. Only the drivers who were determined by the examiners to be at fault are included in this study.

This study was made to determine the effectiveness of the Motor Vehicle Inspection Department in administering the revised Driver's License Law passed by the Legislature in 1935. The inspectors were organized and trained in the fall of 1935, and were placed in the field that winter. The figures shown in this report are the results of their work since that time. It may appear that the investigation of only 70 per cent of the major accidents in the State is a rather poor record, but we must realize that the work was new, the examiners had to be trained, the public had to become accustomed to the new law, and in many cases local law enforcement officers had been lax in these matters.

The purpose and the time available for this study eliminated the consideration of such pertinent data as the location of the accidents, the condition of the vehicles, the weather condition, and the condition of the road. Attention was centered upon the driver, his treatment at the hands of the inspectors, and his previous accident history. However, the Planning Board does contemplate making a detailed analysis in the near future of the causes and the circumstances surrounding all fatal motor accidents which have occured in Iowa in the last five years.

All the records of the Motor Vehicle Department were available for this study. The need for more complete reporting of accident data is clearly evident. The data on the previous accident history of these drivers have not been completed, and for that reason they are not included in this preliminary report. Because of the fragmentary records, and because many of the cases included in this study were not closed the figures do not check in every instance. In spite of this the figures are a reliable indication of the trend in motor vehicle law enforcement.

An analysis of the statistics shows: -

That two-thirds of the drivers lived in towns or cities of more than 1,000 population. (The 1930 census figures show that less than one-half of the State's population lives in towns and cities of more than 1,000 population.)

That 12 per cent of the drivers at fault in these major accidents were women. (The report of all accidents for 1935 shows that only 9 per cent of the drivers involved in accidents were women.)

That more than one-half of these drivers were summoned to appear for examination. Of the number summoned more than one-sixth failed to appear. Only five per cent of those taking the examination failed to pass.

More than two-thirds of these accidents were investigated by the state inspectors.

One hundred sixty-six driver's licenses were suspended for a total of 42½ years; 29 licenses were suspended indefinitely; and 22 driver's licenses were revoked. (This is not the final figure on these cases. Obviously the Motor Vehicle Department very rarely suspends licenses prior to a court action being completed. In instances where cases are pending and continuances have been granted more licenses may be suspended.)

Two hundred sixteen charges were filed against drivers in these accidents.

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AGE OF DRIVER TUnder 20	otal 120	SUMMONED TO APPEAR FOR EXAMINATION Total (continued)
20-29	314	Failed to appear 120
30-49	340	Vehicles inspected
	110	The state of the s
50-64		0
65 and over	35	0
not stated	290	Law tests given 118
SEX OF DRIVER		DEFECTS
	1067	(Determined by the inspectors in the
Female	142	course of their examination.)
		Mental
Number of persons killed	236	Epilepsy 2
Number of persons injured	1375	Vision 8
		Heart trouble 2
IMPROPER DRIVING		Aged, infirm 3
Speeding	93	Other 11
Reckless driving	307	
On wrong side of road	104	ACTION TAKEN AGAINST THESE DRIVERS
Violated right-of-way	194	CHARGES FILED 216
Lost control	123	Careless and reckless driving 139
Cut in	13	Operating Vehicle while intoxi-
Passing standing street car	2	cated 31
Passing on curve or hill	1.3	Failure to stop at stop sign 12
Passing on wrong side	5	Speeding 15
Failed to signal	42	Overloading 2
Disregarded stop sign	48	Other
Hit and run	13	
Following too closely	33	OPERATOR'S PERMIT SUSPENDED 195
Disregarded signal	15	Indefinite 29
Improper parking	28	10 days
No improper driving	203	15 days
Not stated	157	30 days 45
		60 days
DRIVER'S CONDITION		90 days 20
(At time of accident)		6 months
Asleep	13	l year 16
Had been drinking	118	
Physical defects	21	PERMIT REVOKED
View obstructed	68	
Blinded by headlights	4.1	PEDESTRIANS
Not stated	879	What pedestrians were doing:
		Crossing at intersection 59
SUMMONED TO APPEAR FOR EXAMINATION	696	Jay walking 168
Passed exam	546	Alighting from cars 12
Failed exam	30	Condition of pedestrians:
		Intoxicated 20

Sixty-seven per cent of the drivers lived in towns or cities of more than one thousand population.

Eight hundred seventy-nine of these accidents were investigated by the State Motor Vehicle Inspectors.