



EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

REPORT TO THE EDMONTON POLICE COMMISSION

DATE: 2015 May 27

SUBJECT: University of Alberta – Research on Excessive Speed

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the EPC support the EPS in efforts to enact Provincial legislation that would:

Give police the authority to immediately seize the vehicle operated by a driver who has been charged with operating the vehicle at excessive speed (in excess of 50 km/h over the speed limit) and impound that vehicle for a period of 7 days; and

Give the authority to immediately suspend the operator's license of a driver for a period of 7 days when the driver is charged with operating a vehicle at excessive speed (in excess of 50 km/h over the speed limit).

INTRODUCTION:

Speed is one of the leading causes of death on roads. Speed increases the risk of vehicle collisions. Crashes causing damages and injuries take a huge toll on insurance and other costs; however, from a public safety perspective, the greatest cost of speed is trauma and human life.

Excessive speeding is a concern for traffic safety and law enforcement personnel. The Edmonton Police Service (EPS), in conjunction with Edmonton's Office of Traffic, has advocated for the development and implementation of excessive speeding legislation in Alberta. In support of this, a researcher from the University of Alberta was commissioned to examine legislation and its efficacy in other Canadian jurisdictions. The results of that study were released on 2015-03-20.

BACKGROUND:

Three Canadian provinces, namely, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, introduced legislation to counteract drivers who exceed speed limits by more than 50kph. The legislation involved the immediate suspension of the driver's license and the impoundment of the vehicle.

The policy has been in effect for a few years now, and the fatality counts seem to have dropped since the inception of the law. However, no statistical evidence has been provided to support such claims. The goal of the completed study was to perform a detailed analysis of the data from the three provinces to help understand the safety benefits of the legislation.

Overall, it was found that a statistically significant drop in fatal collisions occurred in two of the three (British Columbia and Ontario) provinces after implementing the new policy. In Quebec (QC), a statistically significant drop was observed in injury, property damage only (PDO) and total collision counts; however, this drop cannot be fully credited to the new vehicle impoundment policy only, as a new distracted driving law was also implemented at the same time.

With respect to injury, PDO and total collisions in British Columbia (BC) and Ontario (ON), changes in the series associated with the policy varied and so did their statistical significance. In some cases, the change was positive and significant; whereas, in others the change was negative but statistically insignificant.

In general, the findings imply that the vehicle impoundment policy was effective in reducing province-wide fatal collisions. The effects of the policy on other types of collisions (injury, PDO and Total) are inconclusive. Further analysis, when more post-intervention data is available, could reveal more information regarding the effects of the policy on those types of crashes. Moreover, when combined with other laws and policies, the impoundment law could potentially be effective in reducing injury, PDO and total collision counts, but this finding would require further testing and investigation.

DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH:

- BC, ON, and QC have implemented legislation that increases penalties for those who speed in excess of 50 kilometers per hour. The legislation allows for immediate suspension of the driver's license and impoundment of the vehicle;
- Anecdotally, the number of fatal collisions have dropped in the years following the inception of these laws; however, there is no statistical evidence to suggest that excessive speeding legislation is responsible for this decrease;

- Previous studies indicate that vehicle impoundment has an effect on specific deterrence (i.e., sanctioning the individual committing an offence) but no effect on general deterrence (i.e., focussing on general prevention of crime by making examples of specific deviants);¹
 - The primary reason for use of vehicle impoundment as a sanction is because unlicensed or suspended drivers will continue to drive otherwise.
- Generally speaking, the research suggests that vehicle impoundment is effective in reducing province-wide fatal collisions; however, findings regarding injury and PDO collisions are inconclusive. Specifically...
 - ...In Ontario, vehicle impoundment policy led to a significant decrease in fatal collisions as well as a decrease in the number of injury collisions; however, researchers observed an increase in PDO collisions;
 - ...In British Columbia, vehicle impoundment policy led to a significant decrease in fatal collisions and small decrease in PDOs; however, there was a significant increase in injury collisions; and
 - ...In Quebec, excessive speed and vehicle impoundment legislation was implemented at the same time as distracted driving legislation, so any change in number of collisions cannot be fully attributed to vehicle impoundment policy alone. Nonetheless, there was a significant decrease in injury and PDO collisions as well as a decrease in the number of fatal collisions.

This study illustrated that vehicle impoundment as a deterrent associated with excessive speeding legislation was effective in reducing the number of fatal collisions in BC, ON and QC; however, the results were less consistent regarding injury and PDO collisions.

COMMENTS/DISCUSSION:

EPS has in the past few years pursued actions to bring this matter forward to the Solicitor General and Minister of Justice for the Province. In 2013 a resolution from the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police was approved and forwarded for his consideration. At that time there was no support for such legislation.

Vehicle impoundment has been adopted as a sanction for different types of violations. However, the literature shows that the main reason that policies such as this have been implemented is that suspended or unlicensed drivers continue to drive while suspended (DWS) or drive while unlicensed (DWU). Reasons for suspension can vary, but one common reason is driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI).

¹ Vehicle forfeiture also had a significant effect on reducing illegal street racing

Overall, the presence of those suspended drivers on the roads is expected to pose a safety risk. As a result, police and traffic safety departments found that the most appropriate penalties against such offenders was the impoundment of their vehicles for a certain period of time, which would ensure they would not drive again within that period and that they would think twice before repeating the offence.

On 2013-06-14 an information BN was written and forwarded to the EPC. That BN provided information on a proposed Advocacy Strategy for amendments to the Traffic Safety Act, and outlined what potential messaging could be implemented to successfully raise awareness about the impact excessive speeding has for vehicle operators, passengers, pedestrians, the community at large and on policing resources.

That report also had attached the Alberta Association of Police Governance Resolution (2013) on Excessive Speed and the Alberta Chiefs of Police Resolution (No. 09-01) on Excessive Speed: Seizure and Suspension.

Under the previous Highway Traffic Act, police services in Alberta had the authority to seize a motor vehicle traveling in excess of 50 km/h. When the Highway Traffic Act was replaced with the Traffic Safety Act, this authority was removed.

For the purposes of this report, the following considerations apply:

- The EPS is committed to facilitating changes that improve public safety.
- The EPS identifies speeding offences as a major contributory cause of injury and fatal collisions.
- The EPS concludes excessive speed to be speed in excess of 50 km/h over the posted speed limit.
- The EPS continually apprehends violators who compromise public safety by operating vehicles at speeds in excess of 50 km/h over the posted speed limit.
- Police services in Alberta require stronger mechanisms to deal with this public safety concern.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the EPC support the EPS in efforts to enact legislation that would:

Give police the authority to immediately seize the vehicle operated by a driver who has been charged with operating the vehicle at excessive speed (in excess of 50 km/h over the speed limit) and impound that vehicle for a period of 7 days; and

Give the discretion to immediately suspend the operator's license of a driver for a period of 7 days when the driver is charged with operating a vehicle at excessive speed (in excess of 50 km/h over the speed limit).

ATTACHED:

- COE OTS FINAL REPORT dated 2015-03-20 - Assessing the Safety Effects of Vehicle Impoundment Policies in British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario.
- EPC BN dated 2013-06-14

Written / Reviewed by: Brian ROBERTS, Executive Director, OSM

Approved by: Rod R. KNECHT

Chief of Police: _____

Date: _____

MAY 28 2015 MAY 28 2015

Assessing the Safety Effects of Vehicle Impoundment Policies in British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario

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Report Submitted to the City of Edmonton's Office of Traffic Safety

Final Report

20th March, 2015

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Executive Summary

Three Canadian provinces, namely, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, introduced legislation to counteract drivers who exceed speed limits by more than 50kph. The legislation involved the immediate suspension of the driver's license and the impoundment of the vehicle.

The policy has been in effect for a few years now, and the fatality counts seem to have dropped since the inception of the law. However, no statistical evidence has been provided to support such claims. The goal of the current study is to perform a detailed analysis of the data from the three provinces to help understand the safety benefits of the legislation.

Time series are frequently affected by policy changes, such as the aforementioned legislation; these policy changes are usually referred to as interventions. Interventions can affect the response in several ways. These effects include changing the level of the series either abruptly or long-term, changing the trend, or other more complicated effects.

In this study, intervention analysis of the collision data, by collision severity, from the three provinces was conducted. The main aim of the analysis was to identify any changes in the time series behaviour of the collision data after the implementation of the intervention (legislation). The changes were assessed for statistical significance, and the magnitude of the change was quantified in each case. The analysis was also performed on collision data while accounting for exposure, and similar findings were reached.

Overall, it was found that a statistically significant drop in fatal collisions occurred in two of the three (British Columbia and Ontario) provinces after implementing the new policy. In Quebec (QC), a statistically significant drop was observed in injury, property damage only (PDO) and total collision counts; however, this drop cannot be fully credited to the new vehicle impoundment policy only, as a new distracted driving law was also implemented at the same time.

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