



.08 PER SE LAW IN ILLINOIS CONTINUES TO SAVE LIVES

In September 2000, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released the results of a study examining the effectiveness of the .08 *per se* law in Illinois (see *TRAFFIC TECH* 232). A new study updates these results with 1999 data. The 2000 study, conducted by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), found that Illinois' .08 law, which became effective in July 1997, was associated with a 13.7 percent decrease in the number of drivers in fatal crashes with positive BACs (blood alcohol concentrations). This decrease was statistically significant, and no such decline was seen in the five neighboring states, all of which had .10 BAC laws at that time.

The researchers estimated that the .08 law may have saved more than 40 lives in Illinois in 1998. The greatest effects of a new law, however, are often seen when it is first implemented and the effects may decrease with time. Since the *Effectiveness of the Illinois .08 Law* report was written, another year's worth of fatality data has become available, allowing additional analyses to be conducted.

PIRE conducted new time series analyses using 1999 Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data. FARS is a NHTSA database containing information about every reported motor vehicle traffic crash in the United States that involves a fatality.

Fatalities Attributed to Drinking Drivers

Years	Actual	Predicted	Estimated Lives Saved with .08
1998-1999	876	981	105

Findings

The updated analysis found that the .08 *per se* law continues to be associated with a decrease in the percentage of drinking drivers involved in fatal crashes -- on the order of 12 percent. Once again, no such reduction was seen in the neighboring states of Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, and Wisconsin, all of which had .10 laws. It is estimated that the .08 law has saved 105 lives in the first two full calendar years since its implementation in 1997.

The absolute number of alcohol-related fatalities has risen in Illinois in recent years. This is not a sign that the .08 law is not effective. Rather, there had been an upward trend in alcohol-related fatalities in Illinois before .08 took effect and the new law has resulted in a shift in the level of alcohol-related fatalities with fewer fatalities than would otherwise be expected.

Currently, 29 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have passed .08 BAC laws. In October 2000, Congress passed, and the President signed, the Department of Transportation's 2001 Appropriations Bill. This Bill included the provision that states must enact .08 *per se* laws by 2004 or begin losing federal highway construction funds.

HOW TO ORDER

For a copy of *Effectiveness of the Illinois .08 Law: An Update with 1999 FARS Data* (7 pages), write to the Office of Research and Traffic Records, NHTSA, NTS-31, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590, fax (202) 366-7096, or download from www.nhtsa.dot.gov Amy Berning was the contract manager for this project.



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