

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CURRENT PRACTICES AMONG MOTOR VEHICLE JURISDICTIONS

An investigation of current practices among motor vehicle jurisdictions throughout the United States (including Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico) was undertaken in February 2003.¹

Each of the 52 motor vehicle jurisdictions received a letter from the director of the ADOT Motor Vehicle Division addressed to the jurisdiction's "Motor Vehicle Administrator." Contact information for the addressees was obtained from the membership directory of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) with the assistance of the ADOT Motor Vehicle Division director, a member of that association.

The letter explained the nature and purpose of the research project and asked the recipient to provide two types of information:

- a. A copy of the jurisdiction's primary driver license manual as well as any specialty manuals offered by the jurisdiction.
- b. Completion of a brief (10-question) survey (Appendix A) enclosed with the letter, collecting information on such topics as publication of the primary manual in languages other than English; types of specialty manuals published; distribution methods/locations; frequency of review and revision; and methods used to evaluate effectiveness of manuals.

The survey was also sent to the same individuals in two electronic versions, a PDF and a Word document, thereby enabling each recipient to choose the most convenient method for completing and returning the questionnaire.

DRIVER SAFETY INFORMATION PRODUCED BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

Numerous agencies and organizations offer information and materials on driver safety. Depending on the focus of the sponsoring organization, this information runs the gamut from educational brochures aimed at the individual driver to reports and recommendations from national conferences on specific safety issues. While the latter

¹This research project was initiated in November 2002 with an expected completion date of September 2003. In March 2003 the original researcher left the project. The current project researcher was contracted in September 2004 to continue the project. At that point, driver license manuals and completed surveys had already been obtained from the jurisdictions. Upon review of the materials, the current researcher determined that manuals from 16 of the 52 jurisdictions had been reviewed and their content documented.

type of information is typically aimed at agencies responsible for implementing broad-scale public safety programs, most of the reports contain recommendations for public education and information efforts that may be applicable to the content of the Arizona driver license manual.

The organization websites listed below were thoroughly searched for driver safety information available to the public. A variety of relevant models, reports, brochures, and other materials were downloaded and reviewed.

- AARP (formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons)
[<http://www.aarp.org/>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005
- American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators
[<http://www.aamva.org/>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005
- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
[<http://www.transportation.org/aashto/home.nsf/FrontPage>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005
- American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety
[<http://www.aaafoundation.org/home/>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005
- American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association
[<http://adtsea.iup.edu/adtsea/default.aspx>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics
[<http://www.bts.gov/>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005
- Federal Highway Administration
[<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005
- Insurance Institute for Highway and Auto Safety
[<http://www.hwysafety.org/>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005
- Motorcycle Safety Foundation
[<http://www.msf-usa.org/>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
[<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>]
Site last visited February 8, 2005

As might be expected, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) and the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) were the richest sources of information related specifically to driver education. AAMVA is the primary organization representing the state and provincial officials in the United States and Canada who administer and enforce motor vehicle laws. ADTSEA is the professional association for driver education instructors.

The comprehensive *AAMVA Guidelines for Knowledge and Skill Testing (1999)* recommend topics and specific knowledge items for inclusion on driver license tests and in driver license manuals. To identify best practices in driver license manual content, the knowledge items were used as the basis on which to compare content included in the jurisdictions' driver manuals.

The *Guidelines* also contain general recommendations on organization, format, and reading level of the manual as well as the inclusion of graphics and practice questions. Those recommendations were consulted – along with recommendations from other expert sources on writing for the public – in determining best practices with regard to the manual's presentation of content.

ADTSEA offers a comprehensive nine-unit driver education curriculum downloadable for free from its website. Similarly, the American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety has developed an outline for a novice driver education curriculum, also downloadable for free from its website. Topics addressed in these recommended curricula were reviewed with an eye toward supplementing the items recommended.

Additional materials downloaded for review included numerous educational and informational brochures addressing specific driver safety topics or driver populations. All relevant driver safety materials used for this project will be cited in the final report.

LITERATURE REVIEW – USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF DRIVER LICENSE MANUALS

A literature search for current research on the driver license manual as a tool for driver education yielded few results. Included in the search were the driver safety organization websites noted above as well as public policy research centers.

While the body of research on driver education is fairly substantial, little if any addresses or even acknowledges the possible use of the driver license manual as an education tool, and that research which does is at least five years old. The vast majority of current research is directed at improving curriculum and delivery methods for driver education

programs – particularly as they relate to graduated licensing of novice drivers, as exists in Arizona.

Consequently, the research on driver education was reviewed with an eye toward applicability of findings to the content and presentation of driver license manuals generally and the Arizona manual in particular.

In addition to the body of research on driver education, the literature search also examined news, education, and popular media for discussion of traffic safety issues and public education as a means of addressing such issues.