

A Radical Change in Traffic Law: Effects on Fatalities in the Czech Republic*

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Abstract

I evaluate the effects of a new road traffic law in the Czech Republic that became effective on July 1, 2006. The law introduced tougher punishments through the introduction of a demerit point system and a manifold increase in fines, together with an augmented authority of traffic police. I find a sharp, 33.3 percent, decrease in accident-related fatalities during the first three post-reform months. This translates into 51 to 204 saved lives with 95 percent certainty. The decline was, however, temporary; estimates of the effects going beyond the first year are around zero. Unique data on traffic police activity reveal that police resources devoted to traffic law enforcement gradually declined and were shifted towards general law enforcement.

Abstrakt

Studie hodnotí efekty Zákona o provozu na pozemních komunikacích v České republice, který vstoupil v platnost 1. července 2006. Zákon přinesl tvrdší postihy řidičů pomocí zavedení bodového systému a několikanásobného zvýšení pokut, spolu s posílením pravomocí policistů ve výkonu služby. V průběhu prvních tří měsíců platnosti zákona nastal prudký, 33,3 procentní, pokles počtu smrtelných zranění. To představuje 51 až 204 zachráněných životů s jistotou 95 procent. Pokles byl však krátkodobý a odhady efektů přesahujících první rok jsou kolem nuly. Unikátní data o aktivitě dopravní policie ukazují, že prostředky pro výkon služby postupně klesaly a byly více alokovány na obecné vynucování práva.

Keywords: Traffic law, traffic fatalities, policy evaluation, deterrence, enforcement.

JEL classification: I12, I18, K42, R41

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