

Do Double Demerits Work?

Background

In 2002 the State Government introduced legislation to double the demerit points issued for offences relating to speeding, drink driving and non-use of restraints during holiday periods until the Christmas 2007-2008 period.

The Road Safety Council has recommended double demerits continue over long weekends and other holidays for at least the next three years.

Double demerits are effective

A new report produced by market research company Synovate for the Road Safety Council shows that the double demerits initiative has been effective in achieving its core objective. That is, to reduce the number of crashes on West Australian roads during Double Demerit periods.

The evaluation shows that generally speaking, the community is supportive of the double demerits initiative.

Statistics included in the evaluation report demonstrate that the initiative has been effective in reducing crashes.

Facts and figures

The following results are based on available enforcement activity, infringement/crash data, community awareness of double demerits and attitudes towards their effectiveness:

Double demerits equals less crashes

The daily number of any reported crashes during double demerit periods decreased by 7% between 2001-2006. This compares to a 9% increase in reported crashes during non double demerit periods over the same period.

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of average daily reported crashes resulting in injury decreased by 24% during double demerit periods. This compares with an 11% decrease outside of these periods.

Double demerits equals less deaths

For fatal crashes, the decrease during double demerit periods was 24%, compared to an increase of 32% during non double demerit periods.

There have also been decreases in the number of fatal crashes during double demerit periods where speeding, alcohol or the non-use of seatbelts where identified a contributing factor.

Double demerits is combined with more policing

There is normally an increase in police enforcement during holiday periods and the average daily number of total infringements increased during double demerit periods between 2001 and 2006.

An increase in the average daily number of infringements was also reflected in the number of infringements specifically issued for speeding and restraints related offences.

The rate of infringements issued per hour is lower during double demerits periods, perhaps suggesting that drivers do behave more responsibly at these times.

What can you do?

Community understanding about the importance and value of double demerits is important.

You can help increase awareness about the effectiveness of double demerits by providing copies of this fact sheet to colleagues, clients or stakeholders. You can also talk about double demerits with family and friends, particularly in the lead up to holiday periods when double demerits is the focus of much attention.

More information

To access the complete double demerits evaluation report, visit the Office of Road Safety's website at www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au and click on Topics: Road Safety / Double Demerits.

Source: Synovate Pty Ltd, Double Demerits Evaluation 2007; November 2007.