

Right-on-red increases accidents

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The adoption of right-turn-on-red laws has boosted collisions at intersections by 20 percent, or about 20,000 annually, with 1,400 of them involving pedestrians, an independent research group estimated yesterday.

A study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety compared police-reported crash information from six states where right-on-red laws were adopted between 1974 and 1977 with three states where the law remained unchanged.

It concluded that indiscriminate right-turn-on-red laws conflict with Congress' intent in 1975 of promoting such a policy only to "the maximum extent practicable consistent with safety."

Only a handful of states allowed the practice in the early 1970s, but Congress made it a requirement in return for federal aid for state energy conservation plans.

Now it is permitted in all states and the District of

Columbia unless specifically prohibited by a sign at the intersection.

Extrapolating from the data, the analysts estimated that if similar laws were enacted during the same period in all states, 20,000 additional crashes would have resulted each year, 1,400 involving pedestrians.

That finding is almost double a 1976 prediction by the Federal Highway Administration. The agency concluded the law would reduce fuel consumption and auto emissions with a "relatively insignificant number of accidents."

The insurance institute said the results of its study "show that, whatever the savings in gasoline resulting from right-turn-on-red, they are being paid for in increases in pedestrian and other intersection crashes."

"In fact, the adoption of right-turn-on-red leads to an increase of more than 20 percent in all crashes involving a right turn at signalized intersections, with substantially larger percentage increases in urban

areas."

The data showed crashes in urban areas increased 25 percent. Collisions involving a vehicle and a pedestrian increased 59 percent overall, with pedestrian-vehicle collisions in urban areas alone jumping 79 percent.

Elderly victims fared worst: the study found a 110 percent increase in the number of them hit by vehicles. A 100 percent increase was found for other adults, and a 30 percent increase for children.

Adverse effects could be reduced by outlawing right on red in urban centers with heavy traffic, the researchers suggested.

The findings contrast with the economic benefits of the law — which the study estimated at a fuel savings of 25 million to 100 million gallons annually, or from 0.2 to 1.3 gallons of fuel per car — and an annual time saving of 0.3 to 1.7 hours per driver.

The institute, founded in 1959, is a research organization supported by auto insurance companies.

European editorials call for U.S. gun control

LONDON (UPI) — Violence has become an accepted part of the American way of life and will not be cured until there is effective gun control, European opinion-makers, shocked by the shooting murder of John Lennon, said yesterday.

Lennon's "meaningless murder is increasingly typical of New York, and the United States in general, where the freedom to carry guns has brought forth monsters," London's New Standard said in an editorial hours after the British musician was shot and killed in Manhattan Monday night.

But the thrust of editorials, including those in Irish newspapers, condemned the laxity of American gun laws and called for them to be toughened.

Irish sociologist William North said Lennon's slaying was an "invariable outcrop of the laxity in American gun

control."

"The right to own a gun has always been an emotive subject in the United States, dating back to the Founding Fathers," North said.

"Anything short of a fullscale tightening of the laws will be useless to contain such violence, and such a move would be resisted right down the line," he said.

"At the moment there does not appear to be any ready answer to the problem. The United States has become a violent society and will remain so while powerful interests prevent proper gun control."

Most European nations make it very difficult for private persons to own firearms.

British law, which is typical, bans the sale of guns, including hunting rifles, except to people issued a permit. Among other rigorous conditions, permit-

seekers must prove their need of a gun. Owners must keep weapons — pistol, shotgun or rifle — locked in a safe or three-proof cabinet. Guns may not be carried except in specified circumstances, for example while traveling to a shooting club, and the weapon must be disassembled. Ordinarily, British police carry no weapons.

In Dublin, the Irish Press recalled the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy and said there had been "much talk in America" of tightening the laws on the possession of firearms.

"Nothing was done and now, yet again, we witness the tragedy of a lunatic let loose with a gun."

"Will that lesson never be learned?" the newspaper asked.

The Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, reflecting on "violence in the U.S.A., so unfamiliar to us in Sweden,"

said, "It is ironic that such a 'peace apostle' as Lennon should be the victim of a murderer . . ."

"But the violence mentality is so widespread — and unfortunately accepted — in the U.S.A., including the right of everyone to carry weapons, that the end for John Lennon was made all the worse."

The Times of London editorial called Lennon's death "peculiarly American."

The London Daily Telegraph editorial said, "A man who lived with a philosophy of peace has perished by the gun."

It said, "The silly but mainly harmless mob hysteria which followed the Beatles round the world in the '60s has now, in the streets of New York in 1980, a sequel in which some kind of perverted autograph-hunting has turned into murder."

Lawyers face action for Abscam leaks

WASHINGTON (UPI) — A handful of Justice Department lawyers has been warned they may be disciplined — perhaps fired — for news leaks about Abscam and other undercover FBI probes, Deputy Attorney General Charles Renfrew said yesterday.

Renfrew said he has sent letters to fewer than a half-dozen prosecutors giving them a chance to answer allegations that they broke department rules in leaking information about the investigations.

It is possible that some of those involved could face dismissal, Renfrew said, but stressed he first wants to hear the lawyers' defenses and whether there were mitigating circumstances.

Those implicated in the leaks were identified after a massive, costly investigation of the disclosures last February that prematurely ended the Abscam probe in which eight members of Congress were implicated.

Renfrew said he has met with some of the accused lawyers and hopes the matter can be concluded in two or three weeks.

The splash of Abscam publicity so angered Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti that he ordered an extensive investigation. The probe later was expanded to include leaks about the undercover projects called "Britlab" and "Penderf."

The leak investigation — costing at least \$750,000 and involving nearly 40 investigators including an FBI team that looked into possible misconduct by bureau agents — was supervised by U.S. Attorney Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut.

Sources have said Blumenthal's report frequently relies on circumstantial evidence and intuition to pinpoint probable leakers. FBI Director William Webster, who would mete out punishment to bureau agents, told reporters recently the investigation left a number of questions unanswered.

"I am exacting a high standard of proof" in determining whether to hand out discipline, Renfrew said, citing the effect on employees' careers.

"It has to be treated very carefully, very sensitively," he said.

Sources have indicated that executive assistant FBI Director Francis M. Mullen Jr., assistant bureau director Oliver Revell and Sean McWeeney, head of the bureau's organized crime unit, and a number of agents were asked to take polygraph tests in connection with the leak probe.

Last spring, Civiletti said an adverse inference could be drawn if Justice or FBI employees refused to submit to polygraph examinations or performed poorly on the tests.

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