

# Alcohol Top Cause Of Highway Deaths

Capitol News Service  
SACRAMENTO — Alcohol still remains the major killer on California highways but an extensive study by the State Transportation Agency has shown that heart failure is a major contributor to highway accidents.

The agency released its report to members of the Governor's Committee on Traffic Safety.

Meanwhile, the State Division of Highways announced that the fatality rate on the state highway system dropped to a new all-time low in 1966. There were 2,194 accidental deaths on state highways last year, but they occurred as traffic moved 50 billion miles over 14,308 miles of state highway.

The number of miles driven in 1966 was up 2 billion from 1965 but the number of people killed dropped by four.

AS FOR THE transportation agency report, it said that more than 10 per cent of the fatal accidents analyzed during a two-year study turned out to be death by natural cause, rather than death by accident.

The agency did not attempt to downplay the importance of alcohol as a chief contributor to traffic accidents in California. But during 1966, there were 1,474 single vehicle accidents in which the driver died within 15 minutes. Death was the result of natural causes in 155 of these cases. More than 90 per cent of these involved heart conditions.

The natural cause victims were predominantly older drivers — 80 per cent over 50 years of age — and the majority were men. In contrast to the other accidental deaths, most of the natural cause incidents occurred during daylight hours.

"IT BECOMES increasingly evident that persons who die of natural causes behind the wheel of a vehicle constitute

a major highway hazard," Gordon C. Luce, transportation agency administrator, said. "We must find new and better ways of predicting heart problems."

The agency's study covered an analysis of 772 driver deaths in which driver intoxication was involved. Of this, 602 involved men and 71 per cent were found to have been drunk at the time of the collision. Of the 110 women victims studied, 39 per cent were intoxicated.

The study classified as "drunk" those individuals who had a blood alcohol content of .10 percent or higher and subclassified those whose blood alcohol content was 20 per cent and higher as "ability excessively impaired." Drivers whose blood alcohol level ranged from .01 to .09 per cent were placed in the "social drinking" classification.

MORE THAN half of those found to be drunk also were classified as "excessively impaired." The largest single grouping was at the .20-.24 per cent level.

The period between mid-

night and 3 a.m. accounted for 26 per cent of the study cases and, of these drivers, 83 per cent were "drunk." The data indicate the alcohol problem is most pronounced in the 30-to-50 age group. However, 41 per cent of the fatalities in the 15-to-19 age group were found to be "drunk."

IN THE CASES studied, 14 per cent of the men and 16 per cent of the women showed evidence of having taken drugs. The drug tests were limited to barbiturates, tranquilizers, stimulants and anti-infectives. Evidence of drugs was progressively greater in the older age groups.

The Division of Highways report showed the statewide death rate on all roadways was 4,830 persons killed and 101 billion miles driven on 105,000 miles of thoroughfare, for a rate of 4.79 deaths for 100 million miles of vehicle travel. This was the first time the state rate was below 5. The rate on highways was 2,194 deaths from 50 billion vehicle miles on 14,308 miles of state highway for a rate of 4.47.



JAMES R. FERGUSON Joins Force

## Policeman Gets First Assignment

Newly trained James R. Ferguson II will join the Torrance Police force today as a patrol officer after graduation from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Academy Friday.

Ferguson completed a 16-week course at the academy along with 62 new deputy sheriffs and 11 officers from other county police departments.

The new officer is married and has one child. He attended Harbor College before joining the police force.

DURING THE training period, Officer Ferguson spent more than 100 hours working with seasoned officers in actual patrol assignments in Sheriff's patrol units and took 37 hours of instruction in topics specifically related to community relations.

Sheriff Peter Pitchess said of the cadets, "The dedicated young men and women who are graduating have received the finest training that professional law enforcement can offer, thus assuring the residents of the community they serve, the highest level of service possible."

Pay Dividend  
Directors of Title Insurance and Trust Co. have declared a quarterly dividend of 40 cents per share, payable Sept. 8 to shareholders of record Aug. 11.

## Most Valuable Member Named by Accountants

Frank A. Sweeney of Los Angeles has been named the most valuable member for 1966-67 by the Southwest Los Angeles chapter of the National Association of Accountants (NAA).

Sweeney, public relations chairman and associate director during the year, was honored for his efforts to secure new members and for 100 per cent attendance at meetings.

He received the award during installation ceremonies held last week in Manhattan Beach. Richard E. Lambert of Torrance was installed as president of the association. Other new officers include

Donald R. Mellert, John M. Howlett, and Thomas J. O'Connell, vice presidents; Patrick E. Ryan, secretary, and Dennis R. Beresford, treasurer.

Directors include Philip F. Masterson, public relations; Edward J. Armalar, meetings; Keith P. Bengston, employment; Frank A. Sweeney, program; James J. Brunner, manuscripts; Charles H. Preston, social activities; John S. Surabian Jr., educational activities; John Heath Jr., member attendance; Bernard F. Shrier, membership; and Dennis Tons, communication.

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