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Cellphone Laws and Rear-End Accidents

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Abstract

In an attempt to reduce accident frequency caused by distraction involving cellphone use, the state of California enacted two sets of laws banning cellphone use while driving. We examine the relationship between laws to ban cellphone use while driving and rear-end accident frequency in California. Using a panel data set that groups accidents by geographic location, we find evidence that the association between California’s handheld cellphone ban and the number of rear-end accidents is negative and statistically significant. In robustness testing, we find this result is unaltered when we use a broader definition of “collision accident.” These results have implications for public safety and transportation, automobile insurance markets and insurance regulation.

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