

5% of drivers in fatal crashes lacked licenses

By MICHAEL K. BURNS

A survey of Marylanders involved in fatal auto crashes has found that 5 per cent of the motorists were driving with no legitimate license and that 34 per cent had a history of past license denial.

But the survey, which involved studies of 1,447 drivers in fatal crashes and 2,515 non-involved drivers, also concluded that "habitual offenders" do not account for a significant portion of fatal crashes.

The study was conducted by Susan P. Baker of the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health and by Leon S. Robertson of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

In the sample of drivers not involved in fatal crashes, the researchers found that 23 per cent of those with "denied" licenses (suspended, revoked, or refused) had been convicted for a vehicle violation during the period of time they were denied.

The study provides some statistical basis for the contention by state officials that the number of people driving without a license is significant.

The study was aimed at analyzing "habitual offender" laws which attempt to identify

drivers likely to be involved in serious crashes. The researchers found that only 1.5 per cent of the Maryland drivers involved in a fatal crash would have been classified as habitual offenders by the State of Virginia, which has such a law.

Drivers under 21 had the highest rate of involvement in fatal crashes, the study found. But only 2 per cent of drivers under 21 years of age with two convictions were involved in fatal crashes, the study noted.