

GSR opening for a distracted driving study @ SafeTREC

Application Deadline: 12/13/2013

A Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) position to study distracted driving is available beginning Spring 2014 with the UC Berkeley Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC), a research center affiliated with the Institute of Transportation Studies and the School of Public Health. For more information on SafeTREC, visit <http://safetrec.berkeley.edu/>

Project background:

In the past few years, driver distraction from cell phone use has become a hot issue, with many states rushing to pass laws to regulate or ban the use of electronic devices while driving. While cell phone use is known to reduce driver attention and performance, there is limited understanding of the impact that these laws have on roadway safety.

We will be studying distracted driving laws and their effectiveness at reducing traffic injury. The aims of the study are to:

- (i) evaluate the effectiveness at reducing traffic injury of laws targeting handheld phone use, texting, and young drivers;
- (ii) evaluate the effectiveness at reducing traffic injury of different fines and enforcement levels of inattentive driving laws; and
- (iii) compare the effectiveness at reducing traffic injury of various distracted and inattentive driving laws.

We will conduct a state and local-level evaluation of change in fatal and, where possible, injury collisions before and after the implementation of laws prohibiting driver inattention or limiting electronic device use while driving. Difference-in-differences and synthetic control methods will be used to control for underlying crash trends in this natural experiment. The outcome measure for the natural experiments will be the fatal or injury crash rate, in units of crashes per vehicle miles traveled. The results of this study will inform the design of effective laws to reduce traffic injury from driver inattention.

Student responsibilities:

The GSR will work closely with SafeTREC researchers on a variety of tasks, including:

- Conducting an updated literature review on distracted driving
- Managing data collection and database
- Conducting statistical and econometric analyses

Skills and qualifications:

- Good quantitative skills
- Knowledge of statistics and econometrics
- Background in traffic safety
- Ability to conduct individual study
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Familiarity with Stata or SAS is an advantage

Appointment details:

The position will be for one year at 50% starting Spring 2014.

Application information:

Please send your resume or any questions about this position to Dr. Offer Grembek, SafeTREC's Associate Director for Research (grembek@berkeley.edu).