

# Challenge 3: Ensure Drivers are Licensed and Competent

**Goal:** *By 2010, reduce the number of fatalities attributed to drivers with no license, invalid license, or not licensed for class of vehicle by 15 percent from their 2004 level.*



## Background

National research indicates that substantial numbers of drivers continue to drive after their privileges have been suspended or revoked. One of every five fatal crashes involves at least one driver who is not properly licensed (not licensed for type of vehicle, unlicensed, suspended, revoked, expired, or canceled license). California research shows that drivers with a suspended license are almost 4 times as likely to cause a fatal crash as the average driver, and unlicensed drivers are about 5 times as likely to cause a fatal crash. Research conducted in California and New Mexico shows that as many as seventy-five percent of drivers with suspended or revoked licenses continue to drive, although they drive more cautiously and less often. In

addition, some people continue to drive even though their cognitive and motor skills have declined to levels that make them unfit to operate a motor vehicle. The loss of one's driving privilege often stems from serious issues associated with the driver's inability to drive safely. The need to keep such identified drivers, who have had their driving privilege revoked, off the road deserves careful and thoughtful attention.

Figure 6 shows an upward trend in fatalities attributed to unlicensed drivers (expired, suspended, or revoked license, not licensed for type of vehicle) from 1995 through 2004. The most significant increase occurs between 1999 and 2004.

## Strategies

California intends to employ the following strategies to address the challenge of unlicensed and incompetent drivers. The SHSP Implementation Plan will present specific action items to implement these strategies:

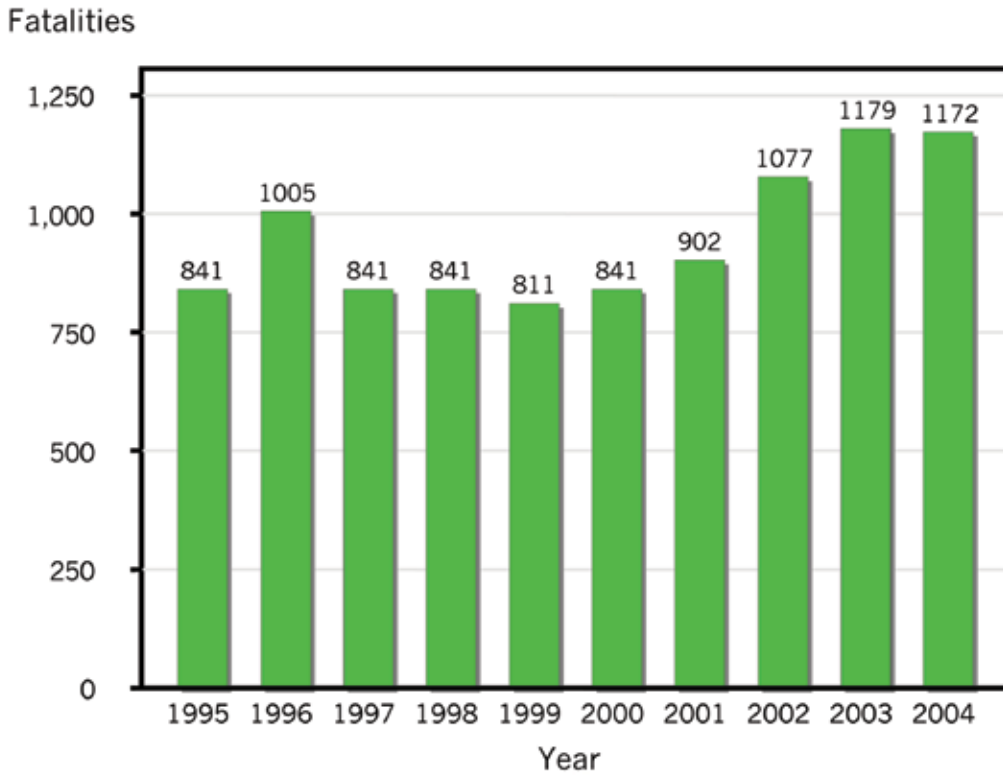
1. Improve the initial licensing process.
2. Improve the competency of licensed California drivers.
3. Improve how California manages unlicensed drivers.
4. Improve how California manages drivers who operate vehicles with a suspended or revoked license.

## Implementation Issues

Key issues affecting the implementation of action items to address the challenge of licensed and competent drivers:

1. Limited incentives and penalties for violators that effectively eliminate repeat offenders.
2. Limited funding.

**Figure 6 - Fatalities in which one or more drivers were unlicensed (expired, suspended, or revoked license, not licensed for type of vehicle),<sup>23</sup> California, 1995 - 2004**



- 3. Limited public awareness regarding the problem.
- 4. Limited range of effective deterrents.
- 5. Laws that prescribe license suspension for a variety of non-driving offenses.

<sup>23</sup> No license; expired, suspended, or revoked license, not licensed for type of