

Japanese police want authority to revoke driver's licenses over road rage, source says

 [japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/08/national/crime-legal/japan-may-change-law-allow-revoking-drivers-](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/08/national/crime-legal/japan-may-change-law-allow-revoking-drivers-)

The National Police Agency wants the law changed to allow it to revoke driver's licenses for reckless driving, amid public concern fueled by high-profile road-rage cases over the past few years, a source said Thursday.

A bill for harsher penalties on such drivers will be submitted to the Diet early next year, the source said.

Currently, licenses are not revoked for road rage unless it leads to death or injury. Drivers are penalized for dangerous acts such as tailgating, repeatedly swerving between lanes or braking suddenly, but they do not lose their license unless they repeatedly violate traffic laws. Even then, those who drive recklessly enough "to clearly have a large possibility of causing danger" have their license suspended for 180 days at most.

The agency is studying ways to revoke driver's licenses for recklessness behind the wheel, for example by revising penalty standards on drivers who warrant concern, or by introducing new penalties for dangerous driving.

Public concern over such driving mounted after a high-profile 2017 road-rage case in Kanagawa Prefecture in which motorist Kazuho Ishibashi forced a minivan to stop in the passing lane on the Tomei Expressway. The van was hit by a truck, killing two people — Yoshihisa Hagiya, 45, and his wife, Yuka, 39 — and injuring their daughters. The Yokohama District Court late last year sentenced the 27-year-old Ishibashi to 18 years in prison.

Following that incident, the police agency sent out directives to prefectural departments in January 2018 to crack down on road safety violations and apply existing provisions more vigorously.

The number of traffic violations related to failure to maintain a safe driving distance doubled to about 13,000 last year.

Other violent road-rage incidents have been widely reported, including the death of a university student on a motorbike who was hit by an enraged driver near Osaka in July last year.

This August, motorist Fumio Miyazaki was arrested for alleged reckless driving and punching another driver on the Joban Expressway in Ibaraki Prefecture.

In September, a driver fired an air gun in a fit of rage on the Tomei Expressway in Aichi Prefecture. The man was arrested on suspicion of property damage.

