



STATE OF DELAWARE
OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY
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To: Corporate Partners
From: Amanda Horton, Corporate Partner Outreach Coordinator
Date: February 1, 2020
Re: Older Drivers - Traffic Safety Newsletter

Driving abilities change as we age.

A photograph of an older woman with short grey hair, wearing a light green shirt and a wide-brimmed hat, smiling while driving a car. The background shows green foliage.

Learn more about how to recognize and discuss changes in your older loved one's driving. NHTSA offers free materials to help!

The NHTSA logo consists of five red stars above the letters "NHTSA" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. Below the letters is the website address "www.nhtsa.gov" in a smaller font.

www.nhtsa.gov

While some motorists can drive safely into their nineties, for others medical conditions, problems with eyesight, sleep, tremors, or memory can make driving more dangerous. Getting older does not necessarily mean a person's driving days are over. With that being said, it's important to plan ahead and take steps to ensure the safety of your loved ones on the road. Some things that older drivers don't tend to think about are factors such as vision, prescription usage, and other limitations with their body. These things all affect how a person drives and are important to keep in mind when getting behind the wheel.

If you think you need to have a conversation with an older driver about his or her driving abilities, remember that many older drivers look at driving as a form of independence. Bringing up the subject of their driving abilities can make some drivers defensive. Be prepared with your observations and questions and suggest alternative transportation options such as taking the bus, or using a transportation service, if necessary.

Answering the following questions can help you determine if you need to have a conversation with an older driver.

- Are they getting lost on routes that should be familiar?
- Have you noticed new dents or scratches to the vehicle?
- Have they received a ticket for a driving violation?
- Have they experienced a near-miss or crash recently?
- Have they been advised to limit/stop driving due to a health reason?
- Are they overwhelmed by road signs and markings while driving?
- Are they taking any medication that might affect driving safely?
- Have they received a ticket for impaired driving?
- Have you noticed them speeding or driving too slowly for no reason?
- Are they suffering from any illnesses that may affect driving skills?



“Safety on our roadways, whether that be drivers, pedestrians, or vehicles, is imperative to the Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles. There are many changes we experience that may affect driving, as we become more mature drivers. I want to share some helpful tips and items to be mindful of as a driver on our roadways. At age 60, muscle strength and range of motion decrease by as much as 25%. At age 70, arthritic joints make movement painful and restrict mobility, and conditions such as hypertension, dementia, and diabetes may affect perception and behavior. At night, drivers lose the advantage of color and contrast that is available during the day. Depth perception and peripheral vision are also diminished. Studies have shown that 90% of a driver’s reaction depends on vision, while some drivers over 50 years old may need twice as much light as someone in their 30s.” – Amy Anthony: Deputy Director, Division of Motor Vehicles.



Amy Anthony: Deputy Director, Division of Motor Vehicles

“To assure maximum visibility, you can do things such as consider anti-reflective eyeglasses, turn your headlights on one hour before sunset and keep them on at least one hour after sunrise. You should avoid driving when you are tired, taking medications that cause drowsiness, and when severe weather is predicted. When you plan a trip, ensure your family and friends know where you are headed, plan stops along the way, and adjust your head restraint. Choosing a vehicle that is “the right fit” is also a part of safe driving; you want to feel comfortable and in control.” – Amy Anthony: Deputy Director, Division of Motor Vehicles

Decisions about your ability to drive should never be based on age alone. As mentioned above, many different factors that come with aging may affect a person’s driving abilities. When an older driver finds themselves struggling with some of these new body impairments, it’s important to take the necessary precautions to protect all vehicle operators on the road. Having a conversation with your doctor can help to determine if it may be a problem for a senior to continue driving. You should also speak with your doctor or pharmacist to determine if any medications you take can impair one’s driving. In some cases, a driving rehabilitation specialist can even assist with helping a person adapt to driving with certain health conditions. If you question your driving abilities, don’t take the risk of endangering other drivers on the road. The Office of Highway Safety gives a special thanks to Amy Anthony and the Delaware Division of Motor Vehicle for their contributions to this month’s newsletter.

The Clearinghouse for Older Road User Safety is a great resource for more information! Please utilize their website at roadsafeseniors.org

Be on the lookout for upcoming outreach events and campaigns!

- Impaired Driving – March 2020

For more information and tools, please visit arrivealivede.com or call our office at (302) 744.2740.

Please continue to share our safety messaging on your social media platforms and email Amanda.Horton@Delaware.Gov with any updated information about your organization. Find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at @HighwaySafetyDE. We also ask that any of our partners that previously received materials in a monthly mailing please recycle and re-use them. Thank you!