



# Older Drivers Safety Awareness

Between 2014 and 2023, the United States population of people 65 and older increased by 28%. In the same period, the number of older drivers involved in fatal crashes increased 41%.

Aging affects everyone differently. It is important to understand that age-related changes in vision, physical fitness, reflexes, and reaction time may cause safety concerns and impact on the way older people drive. Additionally, crashes are more harmful and have a greater risk of injury for older adults than younger people.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NHTSA IMAGES

One key to safety is knowing when a driver is at increased risk, even if we ourselves are that driver. So, we must know what signs to look for and pay attention to them. We need to understand how our driving environment changes, and what we should do to respond to those changes. For example, driving at night becomes more difficult as we age, so older drivers can plan their trips to end before the sun goes down. Since vision can decline with age, ensure older drivers use their newest prescription while driving and avoid glasses with tinted lenses when driving at night.

Check the vehicle the older driver is using. Be sure that all lights are working and all glass is clean. Seats should be positioned so the driver sits upright and can see the road at least ten feet in front of the car. If the seat won't go high enough, consider using a cushion.



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November 2025

Make sure the driver is in good health. Medications can have an adverse effect on the ability to drive safely. Ask them where they're going and what route they'll be taking. Ensure that the driver can turn the steering wheel properly, can move their feet quickly between pedals, and can turn their head to safely look over their shoulder.

Showing empathy and compassion to an older driver can help caregivers and family members navigate age-related changes and driving. Talk to your older loved ones about adjusting their driving habits to continue driving safely.

References:

1. [NHTSA Older Driver Safety](#)
2. [NHTSA Traffic Safety Images](#)

For more information and assistance with local road safety in your community, contact Jason Hughes, Safety Technical Associate, at [jason.hughes@uconn.edu](mailto:jason.hughes@uconn.edu) or Shawn Barry, Safety Technical Associate, at [shawn.barry@uconn.edu](mailto:shawn.barry@uconn.edu).

