

Senior Drivers – Part 1

Many traffic accidents are related to extremes in ages of drivers. The biggest concern has always been new drivers. Teens will always cause more than their share of accidents because they don't have the experience or maturity to drive as carefully as they should. But, inevitably, time passes and their driving improves. However, that improvement doesn't last forever.

All drivers continue to age and, eventually, driving skills will be lost. It is up to us as individual drivers to address how we handle our ability to drive a car, van, truck or SUV. It is important to recognize that older drivers can make adjustments. It probably comes as no surprise that the easiest way to adjust driving habits is to pay greater attention to traffic signs, signals and speed limits. Obeying posted instructions will decrease the chance that an older driver will have to rely on deteriorating eyesight and slower reflexes to avoid an emergency situation.

Some states have laws that increase requirements for older drivers to renew their driving privileges. However, such requirements, such as shorter licensing periods and mandatory driving tests, don't occur until drivers are well past 70 years of age. It makes more sense for drivers to change their habits as well as look for ways to objectively assess their current driving skills. Mature drivers should consider the following:

- Consider restricting driving to non-peak hours whenever practical
- Avoid driving in poorer weather
- Stop driving at night
- Be aware of how any prescription medicines may affect vehicle operation
- Voluntarily take driving tests so an objective party can evaluate skills
- Search Websites, such as those sponsored by state motor vehicle departments, senior associations or driving clubs which offer self-assessment questionnaires
- Reduce distractions while driving, such as minimal or no use of cell phones, audio devices, etc.
- Be more sensitive to feelings of fatigue and don't drive while tired
- When circumstances call for it, consider giving up your license and depend on other means of transportation

As a group, older drivers will soon grow to unprecedented size. Primarily, it will be as individuals that this group can make sure that it doesn't cause unprecedented problems.

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