



COLORADO

Department of Transportation

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Sam Cole, CDOT Communications Manager
303-859-1304 | sam.cole@state.co.us

Older Driver Safety Awareness Week aims to keep seniors safe on the road

167 older drivers involved in fatal crashes this year.

DENVER — For older adults, mobility and independence are essential to staying engaged and active. However, as people age, their physical, visual, and cognitive functions can decline, making them more vulnerable to severe injury or even death when involved in a vehicle crash. Being proactive about safe driving skills, learning ways to identify changes early, and intervening as soon as possible can help older drivers maintain safe mobility.

This week the Colorado Department of Transportation is joining with local programs to observe Older Driver Safety Awareness Week from Dec. 4 to Dec. 8, 2023. Mobility and transportation options for older adults helps ensure they can remain active in their communities as they age.

So far this year 167 drivers over 65 years old have been involved in fatal crashes in Colorado. Older drivers are more likely to be killed or seriously injured in a crash due to the greater fragility of their aging bodies. Research suggests that older adults can expect to outlive their ability to drive safely by seven to ten years.

“Getting older doesn’t mean it’s time to hang up the keys, but it is a time to reflect on how age affects one’s ability to drive,” said CDOT’s Office of Transportation Safety Director Darrell Lingk. “Taking proactive steps to stay safe as you age is important. And with so many transportation alternatives, it has never been easier to find other ways to get around.”

While some drivers can safely drive into their nineties, for others medical conditions, problems with eyesight, sleep, tremors, or memory can make driving more difficult and dangerous.

Safety advocates encourage people to sit down with older friends and family members to discuss a “transportation plan” that may help identify alternative transportation options if necessary. Families and caregivers may suggest that older drivers:

- Have their vision and hearing checked regularly
- Ask their health care providers to review medications for potential interactions
- Drive only during the daytime when traffic is lighter and it’s easier to see.

Older drivers may want to plan early for alternative mobility options that don’t involve getting behind the wheel of their own vehicle. Most importantly, families and caregivers should show compassion for older drivers who may no longer be able to drive. This can be a difficult time for all involved in these conversations. Understanding and empathizing can go a long way in easing the transition.

Colorado’s Guide for Aging Drivers and Their Families is available for free and can serve as an excellent resource to answer most questions including license reexamination and laws, resources for Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialists, Area Agency on Aging centers, and more. The guide is available through Health Promotion Partners and can be downloaded at healthpromotionpartners.com/aging-drivers-guide. The organization also offers driver safety evaluations, which can be requested by a family or an individual driver to determine the effect of age-related changes on driving fitness. More information about the program can be found at healthpromotionpartners.com/programs.

In Western Colorado, a good resource is olderwiser.org for information on public transit discounts. All Points Transit is a non-profit organization providing public transit services for seniors, people with disabilities and the general public in communities throughout Montrose, Delta, San Miguel and Ouray counties.

CDOT’s Highway Safety Office addresses older driver crash prevention through education, public awareness, and partnerships with state and local agencies. CDOT supports law enforcement training and provides information to seniors on alternative ride programs. CDOT also helps older adults who drive stay safe behind the wheel. This includes sponsoring [CarFit](#) events around the state. At these events volunteers check for:

- A seat belt that holds the driver in the proper position and remains comfortable while driving.
- The tilt of the steering wheel and position of the airbag.
- Plenty of room (at least 10 inches) between the chest and the airbag
- A properly adjusted head restraint.
- A clear line of sight above the steering wheel and dash.
- Easy access to gas and brake pedals.
- Properly adjusted mirrors.
- Ability to see around the vehicle by reducing the driver's blind spots.
- The ability to turn the vehicle's ignition key with ease or operate an ignition system.
- Easy operation of vehicle controls including turn signals, headlights, emergency flashers, windshield wipers, and the parking brake, among others.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration offers free resources on keeping safe as drivers age and provides information about how families and caregivers can create a safe system for all road users whether driving, walking, or cycling. Visit NHTSA at www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/older-drivers.

About CDOT

The Colorado Department of Transportation's mission is to provide the best multi-modal transportation system that most effectively and safely moves people, goods and information. CDOT maintains more than 23,000 lane miles of highway, more than 3,400 bridges and 35 mountain passes. Our team of employees works tirelessly to reduce the rate and severity of crashes and improve the safety of all modes of transportation. CDOT leverages partnerships with a range of private and public organizations and operates Bustang, an interregional express bus service. Find more details at codot.gov.