



Older Driver Safety: Laws, Medical Issues, and Safety Concerns

*A Program of the Donald W. Reynolds Department of Geriatric Medicine
at the University of Oklahoma*



Trooper Tony Harper



Tony Harper

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This morning I was nearly struck by a car while I was out on a traffic stop by an elderly gentleman! He was trying to pass another car and said he didn't see me standing beside the truck I had stopped! STATE LAW states, all vehicle will move to the non adjacent lane and reduce your speed when approach an emergency vehicle with its lights on!

I'm sure if I had been hit I wouldn't have known it because I wouldn't have saw it! It's the bullet that our vest can't stop! I just ask all of you to please be vigilant in your driving, pay attention to what is all around you and remember nothing is so important to get in a hurry to endanger your life or the life of others!



How many drivers age 70 and older are there in the United States?

In **2021**, there were an estimated **32 million** people **70** and older living in the United States, representing about **11 percent** of the population.

**As a mature driver, you
bring a wealth of
experience to the driver's
seat.**

- Age should never be used as the sole indicator for driving ability.
- Drivers 65 and older represent a wide range of abilities.
- No individual should have his or her driving privileges determined solely on their age.

Older Drivers, or More Mature Drivers:

- ✓ **are involved in fewer fatal collisions than in the past.**

Many Older Drivers Limit Their Driving

Surveys show that many people drive fewer miles and avoid night driving or other challenging situations as they get older.

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety
Highway Loss Data Institute



Daily Traffic Crash Toll

Every day in 2021 ...

- 181 crashes occurred
- 83 people were injured in a crash
- 2.1 fatalities occurred on Oklahoma Road

On the clock

- 8 crashes occurred every hour
- 1 crash occurred every 8 minutes
- 1 fatality occurred every 11.5 hours

Oklahoma Highway Safety Office



When do crashes most often occur?

More Crashes occurred...

- On Friday than any other day of the week
- In April than any other month in the year
- Between 5:00 pm and 5:59 pm than any other hour in the day

Oklahoma Highway Safety Office

Adults over age 70 suffer more motor vehicle accidents and more fatal driver and pedestrian accidents per one million miles driven than middle-aged drivers.

Factors contributing to the decline include:

- **Visual Acuity**
- **Hearing**
- **Psychomotor Skills**

A diagnosis of dementia independently increases the risk of a motor vehicle accident (odds ratio, or 2.4 to 4.7).

Factors Affecting Driving

- Vision
- Hearing
- Psychomotor skills/Cognitive deficits

Vision

- The majority of visual impairment and blindness in older people is caused by age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy.
- Age-related changes in vision that can affect driving include: decreases in central visual acuity and peripheral vision, diminished ability to accommodate, and heightened sensitivity to glare.

Vision, continued

- Over age 50, the total horizontal peripheral visual field declines from 170 degrees to 140 degrees.
- Drivers with deficits in peripheral vision have twice as many collisions as those with normal vision. Many older adults avoid driving at dusk and twilight because of these changes.

Diabetic Retinopathy

Most frequent
cause of
blindness in
the US

Normal vision.

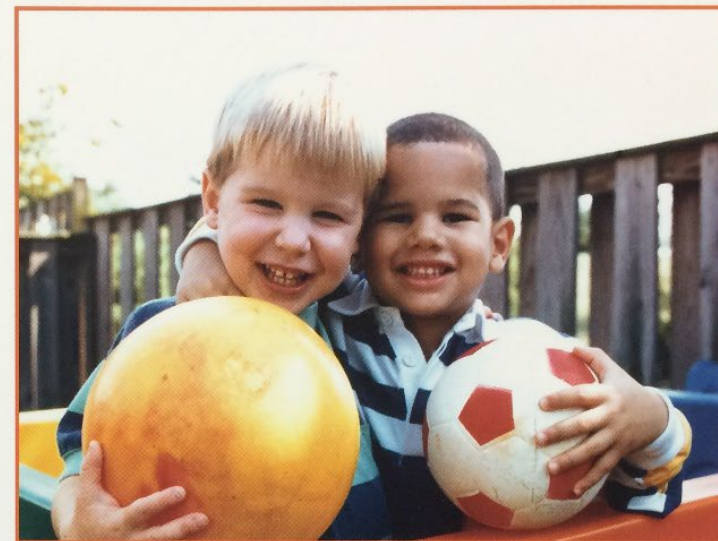


Same scene
viewed by
a person
with diabetic
retinopathy.



Diabetes and Glaucoma

Normal vision.

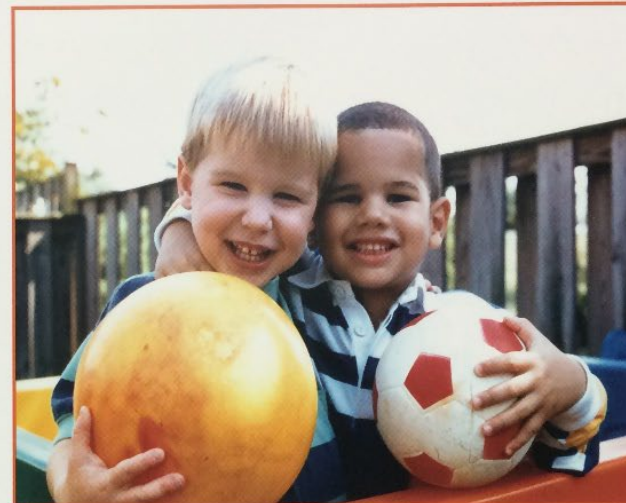


Same scene viewed
by a person with
glaucoma.



Diabetes and Cataract

Normal vision.



Same scene viewed
by a person with
cataract.



Hearing

- Hearing impairment is the third most prevalent chronic health condition in older adults.
- Significant hearing loss can affect driving performance and safety.
- Screening for hearing loss should begin with the history, such as difficulties hearing the television and telephone or understanding speech in a crowded room, and otoscopic inspection for cerumen impaction

Cognitive Impairment

- Fourteen percent of community-residing older adults between 75 and 84 years of age, and over 20 percent of those 85 years and older, have cognitive impairments.
- While older patients with cognitive impairment tend to self limit their driving, a significant number still continue to drive, and the cognitive impairment is frequently not recognized by their physicians.

Considerations

- Develop alternative sources of transportation
- Consider voluntary surrender of driving privileges
- Limiting driving to familiar routes during daylight hours
- Consider referral for a professional driving evaluation
- A substantial proportion (41 to 85 percent) of patients in this CDR range will be judged to be safe drivers by an on-road driving evaluation.

Alternative Testing

- Tests of Dementia
- Trails A and Trails B
- Clock Drawing
- Copying intersecting geometric figures
- Multicomponent Roadwise Review
- Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE)

Non-Driving Observations

1. Trouble walking, swallowing, hearing, or following verbal instructions;
2. Dizziness when changing positions, tripping, and falling;
3. Shortness of breath and general fatigue; and
4. Difficulty following verbal instructions, and/or giving inappropriate responses to those instructions.

Non-Driving Observations

5. Forgetfulness (frequent and combined with other signs);
6. Unusual or excessive agitation;
7. Confusion and disorientation;
8. Loss of coordination and trouble with stiffness in joints.

Steps in Filing for a Driver's License to be *Surrendered* Due to a **“Medical Condition”**

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Driving Observations

Watch the person drive at:

- ✓ different times of the day,
- ✓ different types of traffic, and
- ✓ different types of road conditions and weather road hazards.



Driving Observations

1. Stops at all stop signs and looks both ways to check for cross traffic;
2. Stops at all red lights;
3. Appropriately yields right-of-way;
4. Responds properly to other vehicles, motorcyclists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and road hazards;
5. Merges and changes lanes safely; and
6. Stays in the lane when turning and driving straight.



Initial Steps

- File a request for a: **“Request for Driver Review”**
- DEBILITATING OR CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS with the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety.
- (https://www.ok.gov/dps/Forms/Medical_Inquiry_Forms.html) or form is in your packet.
- Specify type of **medical condition.**



The Good News.....

1. If only **age is specified**, the law will not allow the Department of Public Safety to take any further action.
2. Form will be **thrown out!**
3. Age is not a **medical condition**.

*It's not about your age,
it's about your health.*



Who can submit a Request for Driver Review?

1. Law Enforcement Officer
2. Doctor
3. Family Members



Request for Driver Review



Department of Public Safety
DRIVER COMPLIANCE DIVISION
REQUEST FOR DRIVER REVIEW

Please print or type

"*" areas must be completed.

I request that the below named individual be re-examined for the privilege of

* Driver's Name			* Date of Birth
<i>Last</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Middle</i>	
Telephone Number	Vehicle Plate Number	* DL/SS Number	
* Residence Address			County of Residence
* City	* State	Zip	
Mailing Address (if different from above address)			
City	State	Zip	

Based on my observation, I believe this individual should be reviewed for the following concerns:

Medical Examination

Vision Examination

Written Examination

Driving Skills Examination

Other



Procedures by Department of Public Safety

1. Mail licensee a **letter** to appear in person within **three** (3) weeks to see a Department of Public Safety Hearing Officer.
2. Hearing Officer will make a cursory observation of the licensee, and note the Driver's **physical, cognitive** or **mental health disabilities** that may exist.
3. Hearing Officer will make a note of **any or all issues** that would create a hazardous condition for this Driver to operate a motor vehicle.

If Driver Poses an Immediate Hazard While Driving:

1. Hearing Officer **may immediately request** licensee **surrender** the driver license.
2. If at the time of the interview, the medical condition does not warrant the immediate surrender, the licensee **will be required to have their primary care physician complete a:**

"medical examination form".



Action Steps by DPS Medical Doctor

DPS Medical Doctor on staff will review both:

1. Hearing Officer Interview; and the
2. Completed Medical Report.

Medical Doctor with DPS will:

1. Make a recommendation for licensee to cancel; or
2. To retain the driving privileges.



Cancellation of License

1. **Letter of cancellation** is sent to licensee.
2. Cancellation would remain in effect until such time as noted that the licensee has made a
3. **significant medical recovery.**
4. Licensee can get license back with **improvement of health.**



Could You Be Arrested?

- ✓ Driving while using pain medications is:

“DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE”!!!

- ✓ If arrested while operating a motor vehicle under the Influence of DRUGS, and you are driving:

“YOU WILL GO TO JAIL.”



Licensee is NOT an Immediate Hazard

- Medical Doctor with DPS **may require** licensee to complete a full review examination:
 1. **Written test**
 2. **Vision Test**
 3. **Driving Review Examination**
- Successful completion of review exam, **driving privilege will remain valid.**



Unsuccessful Completion of Review Examination

- ✓ Driving privilege will be **cancelled**.....

until, Driver is capable of **passing** the
Review Examination.



Reporting to DPS

- Department of Public Safety will require periodic:
medical reporting.

Medical Reporting will include:

1. monitor the condition of the driver,
2. take notice of any future issues, that may cause the driver to no longer meet the:

minimum medical standards of driver licensing.



Right to Appeal by Licensee

1. Law allows the **right to appeal** by licensee.
2. Licensee would need to **retain an attorney** to file an appeal.
3. Court date would be given.
4. Judge would take into consideration the action taken by the DPS **based on the events** that caused the action.



District court appeal requires

Department of Public Safety to document the case with all parties involved from the:

- Hearing Officer
- Medical Doctor
- Reporting party that completed the “Request for Driver Review”



Privilege and Responsibility

1. Driving is a **Privilege**.
2. With any privilege, **responsibility is required**.
3. Typically, the Department of Public Safety is able to provide the court with **sufficient documentation** to prove the action taken with licensee was justified.

Inconvenient, but it may save a life!



Driver Self-Assessment

- An assessment may prompt the person to be more open to a conversation with you and other concerned individuals about driving.

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 - ✓ AAA clubs—"Roadwise Review"
 - ✓ AAA-Roadwise Rx
 - ✓ AARP's Driving Safety Program, "Are You a Smart Driver", asks drivers to answer ten questions, www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation---click on "Are You a Smart Driver?"
 - ✓ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety---self-rating tool (<http://seniordriving.aaa.com>), 15 statements, driving situations

Family Caregiver Questions to Ask

1. I signal and check to the rear when I change lanes
2. I wear a seat belt
3. I try to stay informed on changes in driving and highway laws and techniques
4. Intersections bother me because there is so much to watch from all directions
5. I find it difficult to decide when to merge with traffic on a busy interstate highway
6. I think I am slower than I used to be in reacting to dangerous driving situations
7. When I am really upset, it affects my driving

8. My thoughts wander when I drive
9. Traffic situations make me angry
10. I get regular eye exams to keep my vision at its sharpest
11. I check with my doctor or pharmacist about how the medications I take affect my driving ability. (If you do not take any medication, skip this question)
12. I try to stay informed of current information about health and wellness habits
13. My children, other family members or friends have expressed concern about my driving ability
14. How many traffic tickets, warnings, or “discussions” with law enforcement officers have you had in the past two years?
15. How many collisions (major or minor) have you had during the past two years?



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