

Driver hits 11: Are elderly drivers making roads unsafe? (+video)

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<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2012/0830/Driver-hits-11-Are-elderly-drivers-making-roads-unsafe-video>

Driver hits 11: 100-year-old driver hits 11 people, including nine children, near a school in Los Angeles. What restrictions do drivers over age 70 face?

By Staff / August 30, 2012



Driver hits 11 people: Preston Carter, 100, talks with police officers after police say his car went onto a sidewalk and plowed into a group of parents and children outside a South Los Angeles elementary school, Wednesday, Aug. 29, 2012, in Los Angeles. Nine children and two adults were injured in the wreck. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

Preston Carter, a 100-year old driver, backed his large blue Cadillac into a crowd of people standing on a sidewalk Wednesday afternoon near an elementary school in [Los Angeles](#).

Four of the children were in serious condition at a hospital, city fire Capt. Jaime Moore [told the Associated Press](#). Everyone was expected to survive, he said.

Mr. Preston has not been arrested, but the accident remains under investigation.

But this is the kind of tragic accident that reignites debate how to keep the roads safe from elderly drivers. A similar incident in 2000 in [North Carolina](#), prompted calls for more restrictions, as [The Christian Science Monitor reported](#) at the time.

Video: <http://landing.newsinc.com/shared/video.html?freewheel=90962&sitesection=csmonitor&VID=23791459>

Many states already have measures in place to check on the driving abilities of seniors.

[California](#) is no exception. The [California's Department of Motor Vehicles](#) requires that people over age 70 renew their driver's license in person, rather than via the Internet or by mail. Older drivers can also be required to take a supplemental driving test if they fail a vision exam, or if a police officer, a physician, or a family member raises questions about their ability to drive.

What does your state require? [Check this AAA site](#).

Preston Carter has a valid driver's license under California law. And one might argue that the checks and balances worked for the 30 years Mr. Carter has been driving over the age of 70. But they didn't prevent this accident.

As the large cohort of Baby Boomers mature, auto safety experts are raising yellow flags. In the next 20 years, the number of drivers over the age of 70 will triple.

Reaching the age of 70 doesn't automatically mean diminished driving skills. But statistically, there is cause for concern, [reports SmartMotorist.com](#). In a 1997 [NHTSA](#) study, older people made up 9 percent of the population but accounted for 14 percent of all traffic fatalities and 17 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.

Senior-citizen lobbying groups have, in some cases, successfully argued that age is not an accurate predictor of driving ability. Their position is that mandatory road tests for seniors, in the absence of an incident, are discriminatory. If seniors are forced to take a road test, all age groups should be required to take them. And as Boomers become a larger segment of older drivers, they also become a more powerful voting bloc on this issue.

The [American Automobile Association](#) has [an entire senior driving section on its website](#) which includes self-testing, driver improvement courses, night driving, and public transportation options.

Is that enough? Or will this accident in Los Angeles trigger a fresh bout of legislation designed to protect Americans from elderly drivers?