

## **OLDER DRIVERS: Independence vs. Safety**

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77-year old Dorris Diamond and her 80-year old husband, Dean remain in the hospital Thursday night after Dorris [drove the couple's car into a Newton home](#) Wednesday morning.

Dean's condition is listed as critical.

This was her third accident in the past year after a lifetime of accident free driving. Her family is catching a lot of heat – people are asking ‘Why didn't you take away the keys after the first accident?’

“The people that say that don't understand how hard we've tried in the past 14 months to have to do that.” Dorris' daughter, Becky Woody, explains.

“From the very first accident she had which is a multi-car, it was all parked cars, I went to the DOT office and I said are you going to take her license away? And they said ‘no, we can't’ and I said ‘why?’”

The fact is, it's not that easy. Dorris Diamond did have to be re-evaluated after her last crash and passed her driving test with flying colors. The problem is, the driving test gauges how a person drives at that particular time, not necessarily all the time.

“That is the difficulty for us.” says Mark Lowe with Iowa DOT, “We get a small window of time to see them and they have certain legal rights because driving is a privilege and so under Iowa law we can't just take away that privilege without good reason.”

Diamond was given a restricted license so she could only drive in her neighborhood and only during the daytime. Obviously, that didn't make a difference.

“All three of these accidents happened in broad daylight.” Woody says, “They happened a few blocks from her house. All in Newton. So that restriction was almost laughable,” daughter Becky says.

The folks at the AARP agree, taking keys away from older people isn't easy. This is the greatest generation, they fought wars, often they won't just give up their keys to a family member.

“Keys are just a symbol of independence.” says Ann Black with the AARP, “And the research shows that men even more than women feel that having those keys is really a symbol of their ability to get up and go and be in charge of their own lives.”

Even with her husband in critical condition, Dorris didn't seem to realize just how serious the crash was until she saw this video on our news.

“She watched it.” her daughter says, “She shook her head. She saw the damage that was done and she says ‘I don’t deserve to drive after that.’ So she does understand.”

Dorris’ family wishes the DOT or police had stepped in sooner. They say she would have listened to an authority figure before she listened to them.

“It’s not so easy to just go and grab the keys. I wish it was.” her daughter says, “And people who say she shouldn’t be driving, like I said, they’ve never been through it. They don’t understand.”

AARP has resources if you think an elderly loved-one should consider whether they’re safe to drive.

There’s a [We Need to Talk seminar](#). There’s also an AARP Driver Safety [driver improvement course](#) available.

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