

# NHTSA Announces New 5-Year Traffic Safety Plan and Guidelines for Older Drivers and Passengers

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WASHINGTON - In support of Older Driver Safety Awareness Week (December 2-6), the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today announced a new strategic plan that will serve as a roadmap to ensure the safety of our nation's growing population of older drivers and passengers.

"Safety is our highest priority and that includes ensuring the safety of our older drivers, who represent a growing population on our roads," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "This plan will help enhance safety for everyone by helping states address the mobility needs of their older drivers."

Since 2003, the population of older adults, defined as age 65 and older, has increased by 20 percent and the number of licensed older drivers increased by 21 percent, to 35 million licensed older drivers in 2012.

In 2012, according to NHTSA's latest issue of [Safety in Numbers](#), 5,560 people over the age of 65 died, and 214,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes. Those figures represent a 3 percent increase in the number of fatalities and a 16 percent increase in the number of injuries from the previous year. The data also show that older adults are at greater risk of dying or sustaining serious injuries, even in low-severity crashes. To address these concerns, NHTSA is focusing on the following:

- **Vehicle Safety:** NHTSA is researching a number of advanced vehicle technologies including vehicle-to-vehicle communications, collision avoidance and crashworthiness, that could help reduce the risk of death or injury to older occupants in the event of a crash. Crash avoidance technologies will benefit all drivers, but may be of special assistance to older drivers, while certain crashworthiness improvements could help address the special vulnerabilities of older occupants. The agency is also considering upgrades to its New Car Assessment Program, including a new "Silver" rating system for older occupants.
- **Improved Data Collection:** NHTSA is refining its data collection systems and will continue to evaluate crash rates, real-world injuries, as well as physical, cognitive and perceptual changes associated with driver behaviors. In addition, NHTSA plans to conduct clinical and naturalistic driving studies to better understand the effects of age-related medical conditions, including dementia.
- **Driver Behavior:** Recognizing that age alone is not a determining factor for safe driving, NHTSA continues to focus its efforts on public education and identifying functional changes including vision, strength, flexibility and cognition to help at-risk drivers. This effort includes first-of-its-kind *Older Driver Highway Safety Program Guidelines*, released today, that states can implement to keep older people safely mobile.

"Although older drivers are some of the safest drivers on our roads, our plan builds upon the NHTSA's current work to help older people drive as safely and as long as possible," said NHTSA Administrator David Strickland.

NHTSA's Older Driver Highway Safety Program Guidelines are based on best practices around the country and include countermeasures that can be implemented to ensure the safety of older drivers, including at-risk drivers. The guidelines encourage state highway safety offices to work closely with driver license officials, state departments of transportation, medical providers and aging services providers, among others. [View NHTSA's Highway Safety Program Guidelines.](#)

Read about Older Driver Safety in NHTSA's latest issue of [Safety in Numbers](#), a new online monthly newsletter on hot topics in auto safety - including problem identification, people at risk, and recommended practices and solutions to mitigate injury and death on our nation's roadways. It includes tips for older drivers, problem identification and information on people at risk.