

# TECH NEWS

## TECHNOLOGY NEWS

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## Simple safety strategies to help older drivers

Drivers over 70 years old are nine times more at risk of dying in a car crash than 25- to 69-year-old drivers. With Iowa's aging population, it's important for local transportation agencies to recognize and, when possible, help mitigate the special challenges of older drivers.

### Characteristics of older drivers

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Older drivers often have declining vision and flexibility. They generally find it more difficult to sort through all the information along the roadway and to focus their attention. Older drivers may be slower to respond to highway and street signs and to changes in road conditions.

Implementing the following strategies can help older drivers compensate for these challenges. (Of course, these strategies can help other drivers, too, especially those who aren't familiar with the road or who may be distracted.)



Marie Knaphus, Ames resident, attended a day-long driving refresher course sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons.

### Signs and markings

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- Use "Left turn yield on green" (R10-12) signs to help drivers navigate left turns at signalized intersections.
- Enlarge signs for offset left-turn lanes and street signs.
- Add "No turn on red" (R10-11) signs at intersections with many pedestrians.
- Post advance warning signs for
  - intersections,
  - traffic control signs like STOP SIGN AHEAD,
  - signals obscured by curves, and
  - upcoming streets and roads.
- Clearly mark streets that have two names (for example, one name north of an intersection and another name south of the intersection).
- Use intersection lane control signs for complex intersections.
- Include educational plaques for pedestrians at street crossings.
- Add back plates to traffic signals.

### General strategies

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- Support licensing policy and legislation that encourage, provide, and create incentives for driver enhancement

programs, assessment education, and driver assessments.

- Encourage input from senior groups about transportation planning.
- Offer alternative transportation options and other services for older drivers.
- Increase enforcement functions that protect older drivers and pedestrians.

## For more information

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Information in this article was found through the following resources:

- Iowa Safety Management System's online pages regarding older drivers, [www.iowasms.org/olderdrivers.htm](http://www.iowasms.org/olderdrivers.htm).
- U.S. DOT's *Travel Better, Travel Longer: A Pocket Guide to Improve Traffic Control and Mobility for Our Older Population* (TE5091/Un8r/FHWA-OP/03-098). An online version is available in portable document format, <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/PocketGuide0404.pdf>. (You can borrow a copy from the Iowa DOT library; contact Hank Zaletel, librarian, 515-239-1200, [hank.zaletel.@iowa.dot.gov](mailto:hank.zaletel@iowa.dot.gov).)
- A national report by the U.S. DOT, <http://ostpxweb.dot.gov/policy/Safety%20Energy%20Env/Safe%20Mobility/index.html>.

For additional information, see the following resources:

- The *TRIP Report on Older Drivers* (July 2004), [www.atssa.com/public/downloads/TRIP2003OlderDrivers.PDF](http://www.atssa.com/public/downloads/TRIP2003OlderDrivers.PDF).
  - American Traffic Safety Services Association's *The State of the Nation's Roadway Safety for Older Drivers*, [www.atssa.com/public/downloads/atgroreport2002-2.PDF](http://www.atssa.com/public/downloads/atgroreport2002-2.PDF).
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