

Senior Drivers – Part 2

In part one, we discussed the fact that, as a driver ages, he or she should take responsibility for assessing their continued ability to safely drive a car, truck, SUV, etc. However, since driving represents a person's independence and is perceived as a right; some drivers may fail to evaluate themselves.

For sake of safety to themselves and the general public, it may fall to members of an elderly driver's family to step in. Since family members are often in the best position to observe their relative's driving, it is important to look for any clues that indicate a significant deterioration in the senior driver's ability to operate a vehicle.

The New York Insurance Association (NYIA) recently suggested what family members should consider as signs that an older driver is experiencing diminished driving skills. They include:

- Driving at inappropriate speeds
- Responds slowly to or fails to notice other drivers or pedestrians
- Fails to yield right-of-way
- Does not notice traffic signs or lights
- Shows reduced ability to judge distances to other cars
- Drifts across lanes and bumps into curbs
- Become increasingly distracted or appears confused/frightened
- Has one or more near accidents
- Becomes too weak to effectively handle steering
- Drives without headlights when conditions require them
- Has difficulty with glare from oncoming vehicles, streetlights and other light sources
- Fails to handle maintenance situations, such as under-inflated tires
- Experiences more incidents of getting lost while driving

Once an elderly driver begins to experience the above situations, his or her family should discuss the need to severely restrict driving or suggest retirement as a vehicle operator. Naturally, an elderly driver may resist such a drastic change. Therefore, family members need to be ready to assist the driver in maintaining their mobility by making themselves available to transport their relative to appointments/events, design safer routes, limit driving to daylight hours and good weather, find convenient, public transportation, assist with cost of taxis and look into transportation that may be available via community and senior services.

The NYIA suggests that, when discussing the need to substantially restrict or to give up driving privileges, it is critical to provide specific reasons for making the suggestion, such as documents from a motor vehicle bureau, citing specific incidents the elderly driver has experienced, using medical information that indicates a reduced ability to drive safely, etc.

For more information regarding the risks faced by older drivers, please read part one.

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