

OLDER DRIVERS ARE DRIVING SAFER LONGER

I came across an interesting article in the September issue of the AARP Bulletin written by Warren Clarke noting that older drivers are having fewer crashes, good information for our local drivers as we have a large percentage of drivers over 70 years old. The article claims that the number of people 70 and over killed in crashes has decreased by 18 percent in the last two decades to 4,792 in 2016, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Still too many fatalities, the positive trends come as the number of drivers 70 plus is increasing.

There are many reasons for this trend. Vehicles are safer than ever, with side airbags standard on most new vehicles since the 2008 model year. Vehicles are seeing improved side impact protection in the crash data, especially for older drivers, according to Jessica Cicchino, IIHS vice president for research. Still, a time will come when you'll need to consider giving up the keys, a very difficult decision for our rural area. Many chronic health conditions can compromise driving skills.

If you or a loved one are at or approaching what's viewed as an "older age", consider the following as presented in the AARP article:

- Do you frequently have trouble reading traffic control signs or markings?
- Are you stressed when you drive?
- Have friends or family expressed concern with your driving?
- Do you have impairments that prevent you from looking over your shoulder when changing lanes or when backing?
- Do your meds cause drowsiness?

If you answered yes to any of these, consider this. Perhaps certain driving restrictions can be self-imposed, like not driving after dark, or in bad weather. Ask someone well-versed in assessing driving abilities ride with you and offer you advice on how you can drive more safely.

Today's driving environment is vastly different from when you first got licensed. There are new laws every year, and new signals and pavement markings to deal with. Unfortunately, in NYS, there is no requirement to take a driver refresher course – there should be, for all drivers. However, there are Driver Improvement and Point Reduction courses at a nominal cost that you can take voluntarily and doing so every three years is an excellent idea. Whatever the cost you'll get your money back several times over by the 10 percent reduction of your liability insurance for the full three years (see Did You Know article from the week of June 25th).

Simply getting older shouldn't affect your safety and fitness to drive. Many older drivers enjoy better health than drivers who were the same age decades ago, so they can function more safely today, and for a longer time. So, take care of your health and keep driving safely for a long time. You can do it.