

California's aging driver fatalities are increasing

[Susan Carpenter](#) with Vikram Patel | Take Two®



More elderly drivers will hit the road in the next decade, but family members wonder: When is it time for elderly loved ones to move to the passenger seat?

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reduced ability to avoid accidents and their heightened physical fragility, which makes them more susceptible than younger, healthier drivers.

Kelly pointed to a number of strategies that could help reduce traffic fatalities among seniors, including:

- Making signage clearer, larger and brighter
- Reducing the complexity of intersections
- Installing lane departure warning systems in cars
- Installing blind spot notification devices in cars
- Developing autonomous vehicles
- Accessing rideshare services
- Assessing driving skills of older drivers
- Limiting driving hours
- Adjusting routes

Roadway improvements are not happening quickly enough, she said. Funding issues are the primary factor at both the state and federal levels:

In many states, the funding to make those improvements simply does not exist. And California is an example of a state that has recently taken steps to increase their transportation funding, and that's a great start. But there still is a lack of transportation funding in California, and nationwide.

Ultimately, the best decision for an older driver's safety may be to hang up their keys, though there are some ways to safely delay that potential eventuality.

Fatal crashes involving older drivers are increasing. According to a new report from the nonprofit transportation research group, TRIP, California has the largest number of licensed drivers over 65 and the third highest number of fatalities involving at least one of those drivers.

An increase in traffic fatalities is a national trend across all ages, according to Carolyn Kelly, TRIP's Associate Director of Research and Communications. But while the overall number of such fatalities is up 11% over the past five years, Kelly said traffic fatalities involving drivers 65 and older have increased by 22% over the same timeframe.

As the baby boom generation continues to age, the numbers of licensed drivers that are 65 and older is increasing at exponential rates. So, as you see more older Americans on the road and more older Americans who are living very active lives, you are starting to see a corresponding increase in their involvement in fatal crashes.

Kelly also cited two compounding factors: older drivers'



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