

More older drivers involved in fatal crashes in Ohio

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WASHINGTON, D.C.: Older drivers are getting into more fatal traffic crashes in Ohio.

TRIP, a national transportation research group, released a new report Tuesday that says 250 people were killed in the state in 2016 in accidents that involved at least one driver 65 or older. That was the seventh highest total in the nation.

Meanwhile, 22 percent of fatalities in the state involved at least one driver 65 or older — the 11th highest percentage.

“AAA is concerned by the growing number of injuries and deaths involving older drivers in our state, and commends TRIP for bringing light to this issue,” Mary Lou Gallimore, traffic safety program manager at AAA Ohio Auto Club, said in a prepared statement. “AAA aims to keep mature operators driving safer, longer and has been working with the Ohio Department of Transportation and other safety advocates to keep aging road users safe through education, licensing, alternative transportation and infrastructure enhancements.”

The report, “Preserving the Mobility and Safety of Older Americans,” notes that the rate of fatal accidents involving older drivers is outpacing the growth in the senior population. It also says there are more than 1.6 million licensed drivers in Ohio who are 65 or older, the sixth highest number in the country. Senior drivers comprise 20 percent of all licensed drivers in the state, the 15th highest percentage in the U.S.

TRIP examined data from 2012 to 2016 to chart the increases in fatal crashes.

Older Americans are more mobile and active today and want to maintain that lifestyle for as long as possible, the group says. Among those 65 and older, 90 percent of travel takes place in a private vehicle and 79 percent live in car-dependent suburban and rural communities.

“As transportation agencies work to reduce fatalities and serious injuries among older drivers, we are able to implement safety improvements that assist all road users,” Rudy Malfabon, director of the Nevada Department of Transportation and chair of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Committee on Highway Traffic Safety, said in a prepared statement. “Wider lane striping, larger sign lettering, and more prominent milepost signage are just a few of the strategies that benefit older road users as well as all motorists and first responders. These efforts help us move toward our vision of zero traffic fatalities.”