

moving rightalong

OBLIGATIONS AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
OLDER DRIVERS



Information Sheet 7

Buying a safer car



Government of South Australia

Department of Planning,
Transport and Infrastructure

Moving Right Along: Obligations and Opportunities for Older Drivers encourages safer, greener and more active travel for older South Australians.

It comprises a series of Information Sheets about fitness to drive and legal responsibilities, driver assessments, ideas for maintaining the ability to drive safely and planning for the time when you, a family member or friend will decide to drive less or stop driving altogether.

Buying a safer car

If you are thinking of changing your car, consider purchasing the newest and most suitable vehicle you can afford. New cars generally have the latest safety technology, making them safer than those of the past.

Research shows that if we all drove the safest car in its class, the number of fatalities and serious injuries would reduce dramatically.

A safer vehicle

When buying a vehicle, there are many safety features to consider, including:

- safety rating - more stars indicate an above-average vehicle safety rating for occupant protection
- Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and Electronic Stability Programs (ESP) - assist in controlling the car
- airbags - front, side and curtain airbags reduce the risk of the driver and passengers hitting the steering wheel or side windows of the car and receiving serious, life-threatening injuries
- seatbelt pre-tensioners, reinforced doors and crumple zones - absorb energy and protect occupants in event of crash
- headrests - minimise the risk of whiplash injuries
- vehicle size - larger cars (excluding four-wheel drives) offer better protection than smaller cars but they may be more difficult to manoeuvre. Consider purchasing the size of car that you are comfortable driving and remember that vehicle size should suit all people who will drive the vehicle

- colour - light and bright colours are more visible to other road users
- power steering - less physical effort is needed to turn and control the car
- visibility - good visibility through all the windows and mirrors is important for safety
- window tinting - the harshness of full sunlight is less but tinting may reduce visibility at night
- window and mirror size - larger size could make a difference to visibility.

Other things to consider are:

- automatic transmission
- clear and easy to read instrument panel
- air conditioning
- audible alarms for reverse parking, low fuel and seat belt warning
- adjustable steering column and driver's seat positions
- adjustable seat belt height on the door column
- cruise control
- fuel type for more efficient engine performance and fuel economy
- electric mirrors.

A greener vehicle

Now could be the time to find out more about cars that are designed to use alternative fuels. They produce less pollution and have a positive impact on air quality.

Several major vehicle manufacturers are producing cars with hybrid engines, adapting to battery or electric power sources, requiring less fuel per kilometre of travel and generating less pollution.

This means that you spend less money on fuel.

It is worth finding out more about these vehicles - one of them could suit you!

Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP)

ANCAP provides star ratings for new cars and information about the level of occupant protection provided by vehicles in serious front and side crashes. You can also check a new car's crashworthiness.

ANCAP brochures are available at www.howsafeisyourcar.com.au and from the Royal Automobile Association (RAA) and Service SA Customer Service Centres.

Second-hand vehicles

The Used Car Safety Ratings are published for a range of second-hand vehicles. These ratings show that some used vehicle models offer much better protection than others in the event of a crash.

The Used Car Safety Ratings brochure is available at www.howsafeisyourcar.com.au and from the Royal Automobile Association (RAA) and Service SA Customer Service Centres.



Roadworthiness

The *Australian Road Rules* require that you keep your vehicle in a roadworthy condition. Continue to regularly check the following and have them included in the regular servicing schedule for your car:

- brakes and brake fluid
- headlights, parking lights, brake lights and indicators
- oil levels and engine leaks
- steering
- trailer and caravan connections
- tyres and tyre pressure
- windscreen, wipers and water levels.

Your legal responsibility

As a licensed driver in South Australia and regardless of your age, you are **legally required** to report any medical condition or medication that may affect your ability to drive a motor vehicle safely. Please contact a Service SA customer service centre www.sa.gov.au/contact-us or call 13 10 84 for information regarding reporting a medical condition.

Also, health professionals are **legally required** to notify the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure as soon as they consider that you suffer from a physical or mental illness, disability or deficiency, or take medication that would be likely to endanger the public if you drive a motor vehicle.

The health professional does not need your permission as this notification is **compulsory by law**.

The consequences for failing to notify a reportable medical condition and continuing to drive are severe.

If involved in a crash:

- you may be charged with related driving offences and with failing to notify a reportable medical condition
- you may be sued for any damages to people or property caused by the driver in that crash
- your private car insurance coverage may be affected.

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For resources and contact details of relevant government departments and other organisations refer to Information Sheet 11.

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