

moving rightalong

OBLIGATIONS AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
OLDER DRIVERS



Information Sheet 9

Retiring from driving



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.

Retiring from driving

A smooth and successful transition from driving ... to occasional driving ... and then to not driving at all happens best when it is planned. Too often planning for retirement does not include the issue of retiring from driving. Good planning means there is very little loss of mobility or independence, if any.

It is important to understand that people can become annoyed and angry if they feel that their decisions are being made for them. They may experience symptoms of grief at having to give something up and these can worsen if they feel that they had no part in making the decision.

Ceasing driving can also cause a negative impact on their wellbeing and create a feeling of being isolated from their community.

It does not have to be this way. If there is recognition that giving up driving is not because of age but because of losing the ability to manage the complicated tasks associated with driving, many issues can be addressed prior to making that decision.

By recognising and understanding the changes that occur as you age, it is possible to gradually reduce the complexity of the driving and adjust to the lifestyle changes this creates.

Easy decisions to start with

Research shows that many older drivers self-regulate by restricting their driving to short trips, during good weather and daylight hours.

A study by the Centre for Automotive Safety Research at the University of Adelaide has shown that many older drivers respond to age-related changes in ability by reducing driving in certain difficult conditions, such as at night time and in rainy weather. The researchers also found that older drivers, as a result, tended to have less crashes at night and in wet weather.

You can make simple decisions to self-regulate your driving.

- Choose to drive for short trips only, and use other transport for longer journeys.
- Change driving patterns to suit your capabilities, such as not driving during peak hour times, at night or in bad weather.
- Plan to make fewer trips - organise to do your shopping on the same day that you visit the library, go to the post office and have an appointment.
- Plan each trip so that you cross busy intersections where there are traffic lights with turning arrows.
- Find out how to use the public transport services in your local area. Taking trips and understanding public transport while you are still able to drive will make it much easier to use when you retire from driving.
- Remember – a simple decision could save your life, or the life of someone you love.

Situations to avoid

The following situations may distract or make driving difficult:

- peak hour traffic and busy intersections
- driving in rain, fog, hail or in windy or stormy conditions
- driving at times when you would normally be asleep - you are more likely to feel tired at these times and your concentration will not be as good
- driving a car with dark tinted windows
- stickers on car windows and ornaments hanging from the mirror may obstruct your view
- wearing sunglasses or tinted glasses at night, unless your eye specialist prescribes them. Deciding to avoid driving at night still allows for safe travel during the day.

Some medical conditions require a change in the amount of driving that people can do. Early consultation with your health professional will help you develop a plan for the extent of your driving.

Long distance travel

- Be aware of medical conditions and sleep disorders that may make it difficult to drive long distances.
- Travel by bus, train or plane - they are safer alternatives, take stress off the trip and you can watch the world go by.
- Share the driving on longer trips. Swap drivers or plan shorter driving stages if you tire quickly.



Some ideas to help you continue driving safely

- If you are buying a replacement car, make sure that all the people who will drive it are comfortable with your choice.
- Maintain your fitness to drive. Do a refresher driving course.
- Keep healthy and physically active to maintain flexibility and strength.
- Changes are made to the road rules over time. Make sure you keep up to date by referring to the *Australian Road Rules* or doing online tests on the Royal Automobile Association (RAA) website or by doing the online road rules refresh quiz at www.mylicence.sa.gov.au

Choosing a retirement location

Research has shown that many older adults often do not plan for the day when they will no longer drive. Some people move to different areas when they retire and have to learn about the services in their new community. As part of planning for your future, investigate the availability of public transport and community services in the suburb or town where you plan to live.

- Are the shops within walking distance?
- Are there medical services close by?
- How close are you to friends and family?
- Does the location provide the lifestyle choices that you enjoy?
- Are there social activities for you?

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.

Moving Right Along Information Sheets

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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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