

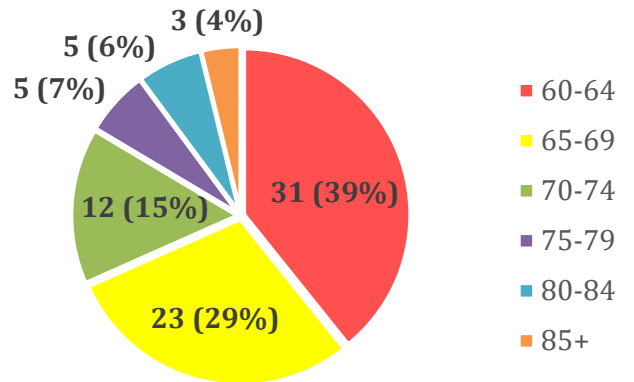


MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY: Prevention of work-related injuries & illnesses through research & investigation

INJURY PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR OLDER DRIVERS

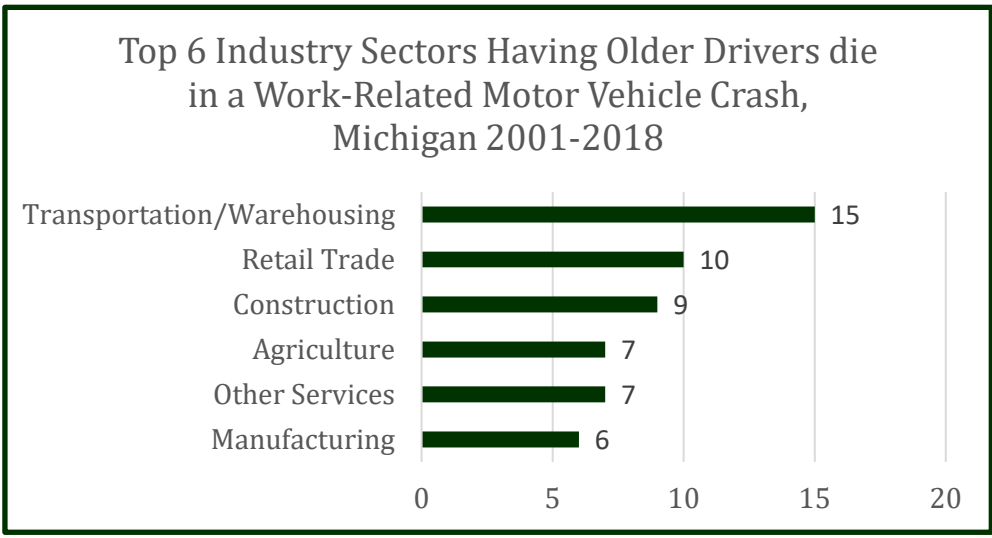
Hazard Alert Older Drivers 4/10/20

A motor vehicle crash has been the leading cause of a work-related (WR) death in Michigan from 2001-2017; in 2018 it was the second leading cause of death. A WR vehicle crash has killed 462 workers, of whom 411 (89.0%) were the driver of the vehicle. Of the 411 drivers, 79 (19.2%) were 60 years of age or older. **Figure 1** shows the age distribution of the older drivers killed in a motor vehicle crash.



MICHIGAN WORK-RELATED VEHICLE CRASH FATALITY NARRATIVE EXAMPLES

- A male semi-truck driver in his 60s died when his semi-tractor/trailer overturned on its left side. He was traveling at an excessive speed on a dry expressway ramp, causing his load to shift during the turn. He was wearing a seatbelt/shoulder harness. The airbag did not deploy.
- A male tire company warehouse manager in his 60s died when the company van he was driving rear-ended a semi-trailer which had just merged from a ramp in to the right lane of an expressway. As the semi completed its merge with its 4-way lights activated, the decedent's vehicle struck the rear of the trailer. Witnesses indicated the decedent did not appear to apply the van's brakes.
- A male construction equipment operator in his 60s died when he lost control of his westbound dump truck after the passenger-side front tire exploded. The truck crossed the centerline of the eastbound travel lane, then down an embankment and struck multiple trees. He was not wearing his seatbelt/shoulder harness. The truck was not equipped with airbags.
- A male truck driver for a corn and soybean farm in his 70s died when his semi-truck veered right off the roadway and then re-entered the roadway, crossing left into the lane of oncoming traffic and striking an oncoming semi-truck head-on. He was not wearing a seat belt. It is unknown if his airbag deployed.
- A male community service volunteer in his 80s died when the vehicle he was driving crossed the centerline and struck two oncoming vehicles. He was wearing a seatbelt/shoulder harness. The vehicle's airbags deployed
- A manufacturing firm semi-truck driver in his 60s was driving northbound when he sideswiped an SUV traveling in the same direction, causing his semi to leave the roadway and jackknife. The decedent was trapped in the truck and later died. He was wearing a shoulder/lap belt. The semi was not equipped with airbags.



PREVENTING FATAL WORK-RELATED VEHICLE CRASHES INVOLVING OLDER DRIVERS

Although individuals cannot control roadway conditions, all drivers should be aware of and use safe driving behaviors. This includes identifying hazards that could be encountered on their trip and understanding the factors that contribute to crashes. Employers should establish an effective road safety program, provide safety information, and set and enforce driver safety policies. Older drivers should be aware that age-related declines in vision, hearing, reaction time, medical conditions and medications, and cognitive function may affect their driving ability.

Employers should:

- **Assign** a key member of the management team responsibility and authority to set and enforce a comprehensive road safety program encompassing the following topics: (See [MSU OEM URL](#))
 - Management commitment/Employee Involvement
 - Hazard Inventory/Risk Assessment
 - Establish Road Safety Policies and Safe Work Procedures
 - Establish Driver Selection Criteria and Regular Driver Review Process
 - Provide Driver Education and Training
 - Ensure Vehicle Preparedness (Selection, Inspection and Maintenance):
 - Incident Reporting and Follow-up
 - Program Evaluation
- **All Drivers including Older Drivers should:**
 - **Wear** a seat belt/shoulder harness
 - **When possible, drive when conditions are safest** (daylight and good weather)
 - **Ask for a medication review** (both prescription and over the counter) by a doctor or pharmacist to identify drug interactions, side effects
 - **Have an eye exam** at least one time per year. **Wear** glasses and corrective lenses as required.
 - **Leave plenty of time** to reach destination.
 - **Ensure** they are well rested. **Take** regular rest breaks.
 - **Avoid distractions** while driving, including eating and talking on a cell phone.
 - **Plan the route**, especially if traveling in an unfamiliar area. **Use caution** at intersections and interchanges, especially when making left hand turns.
 - **Determine safest route** with well-lit streets, intersections with left turn signals and easy parking.
 - **Leave a large following distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you.**
 - **Participate in refresher driving training.**

DID YOU KNOW?

- One in 6 drivers in the United States are 65 years or older
- Older drivers are more likely than other drivers to have a crash at an intersection (particularly when turning left) and when merging or changing lanes on a freeway
- Drivers ages 65 and older have higher crash death rates per mile driven than all but teen drivers and are more likely to die
- The average driver makes about 20 major decisions during each mile driven – and often has less than one-half second to react to avoid a potential collision

Resources

- **MSU OEM:** Work-Related Roadway Collisions: Prevention Strategies for Employers.
https://oem.msu.edu/images/Alerts/HAZ_ALE_RTS_RoadwayCrashPreventionfinal.pdf
- **CDC – Older Drivers Information**
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/features/older-driver-safety/index.html>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/older-adult-drivers/index.html>
- **National Institute on Aging – Older Drivers Website:**
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/older-drivers>
- **NHTSA’s Older Drivers Website:**
<https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/older-drivers>
- **AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety- Senior Driver Website:**
<https://seniordriving.aaa.com/>