

Older workers who drive top traffic death list, CDC reports

August 22 2013, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter



Older employees who drive for a living are three times more likely to die in an accident than younger workers.

(HealthDay)—Older workers who drive as part of their job have significantly higher traffic death rates than younger workers, U.S. health officials reported Thursday.

Workers aged 65 and older have about three traffic-related deaths per 100,000 people, which is triple the rate of workers aged 18 to 54, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Driving safety is really a shared responsibility between employers and workers," said lead researcher Stephanie Pratt, coordinator of the Center for Motor Vehicle Safety at the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

"The risk is not restricted to workers employed in what we think of as typical transportation occupations, like a truck driver or delivery driver," Pratt said. "The risk cuts across all industries and occupations."

The risk for [older drivers](#) begins to increase at 55, and then increases much more at 65 and older, Pratt said.

There are things employers can do to help older drivers stay safe on the road, she said.

"Employers can provide opportunities for older drivers to reduce their exposure to [driving](#)," she said. These include using other types of transportation, allowing work schedules that avoid night driving and providing options to take breaks from driving, Pratt said.

The report was published Aug. 23 in the CDC publication *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

"Older drivers are overrepresented in [fatal crashes](#), not because they are more dangerous drivers but because they are more likely to be injured or killed because of their frailty," said Jacob Nelson, director of traffic safety advocacy at the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

Nelson said employers can help [older workers](#) stay safe behind the wheel. For example, employers can educate drivers about their greatest risks and hazards, he said. These include making left turns, driving at night and taking medications that cause drowsiness.

Older drivers need to understand their limitations, Nelson said. "They need to understand what they can do to address those limitations and create a situation where they can drive safely for as long as possible," he said.

According to the report, more than 11,500 workers aged 18 and over died while driving for work between 2003 and 2010. Among these deaths, 26.9 percent were among those aged 55 and older.

The traffic death rate varied with race and ethnicity, with the highest rates among older American Indian/Alaskan Native drivers—pegged at more than four times that of younger drivers.

The traffic death rate for older white and black drivers was also high—three times that of younger drivers—and for Hispanic drivers aged 65 and older the death rate was twice that of younger drivers, the researchers found.

By industry, workers in transportation and warehousing accounted for a third of the deaths. The traffic death rate was highest for all age groups in that category, but highest (21.2 percent) for those aged 65 and older, the report noted.

By occupation, the rates were highest among those working in transportation and material moving. These jobs accounted for 50 percent of all the deaths, with those aged 65 and older at the greatest risk, accounting for 22.9 percent of deaths.

Most deaths were caused in collisions between vehicles, and 48 percent of these deaths were of [drivers](#) aged 65 and older.

Among those aged 65 and older, 23 percent of the accidents happened while driving a car, 22 percent while driving a tractor trailer and 15 percent while driving a pickup truck.

Among those aged 65 and older, 9 percent of the deaths involved off-road or industrial vehicles, compared with 2 percent for younger [workers](#), the researchers added.

For all those who died, driving was their main job, the investigators noted.

More information: For more information on senior driving, visit the [AAA](#).

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Citation: Older workers who drive top traffic death list, CDC reports (2013, August 22) retrieved 20 December 2022 from

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