

## Older drivers with history of falling have higher crash risks

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BOISE – Older drivers with a history of falling are 40 percent more likely to be involved in motor vehicle crashes than their peers, according to a new study released by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

The findings are relevant because a record 12 million older drivers are expected to experience a fall this year. In addition, an aging — and growing — senior driving population means drivers 60 and older are already involved in more than 400,000 motor vehicle crashes each year.



AAA Foundation study shows preventing falls has tangible benefits behind the wheel

“This research is critical because it shows that we can now use an older driver’s fall history to identify if they are at greater risk for a crash,” according to Peter Kissinger, President and CEO of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

The report, *Associations Between Falls and Driving Outcomes in Older Adults*, shows that falls result in a loss of functional ability that can make it more difficult to drive safely, including being able to steer or to brake to avoid a crash.

“Consider that a wrist fracture or broken leg can limit your ability to safely operate a vehicle,” says Dave Carlson, director of government affairs for AAA Idaho. “It’s not hard to imagine the next step in the digression results from the fear of falling, which decreases physical activity even further,” he said.

The study shows that when it comes to physical health, drivers face a use-it-or-lose-it proposition. But understanding the connection between falls and crash risk can serve as an early indicator of declining physical fitness to seniors and their families.

What older drivers prone to falling can do

“Older drivers should find activities that enhance balance, strengthen muscles and promote flexibility,” said Jake Nelson, AAA’s Director of Traffic Safety and Advocacy. “Even a low impact fitness training program or driver improvement course can help safely extend an older driver’s years on the road.”

Fall prevention is a great way for older drivers to keep themselves and others safe while on the road. Those concerned about a parent or other older driver should help them monitor risk factors that

address health concerns or household dangers. AAA recommends a series of exercises and stretches to improve neck, shoulder, trunk, back and overall body flexibility, which can help a driver who has suffered from a recent fall.

As a leading advocate for senior driver safety, AAA also offers a variety of programs and resources to help older drivers improve their driving performance and avoid crashes.

For more information on AAA resources for older drivers, such as RoadWise online/classroom courses or other programs that help seniors better “fit” with their vehicles, visit [www.SeniorDriving.AAA.com](http://www.SeniorDriving.AAA.com).

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has launched a multi-year research program to more fully understand the driving patterns and trends of older drivers in the United States. The research is designed to generate the largest, most comprehensive database about the senior driving experience.

See the latest report online at [www.AAAFoundation.org](http://www.AAAFoundation.org).