**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Older Ohioans: Know your abilities and options to stay on the road safely**

*State agencies partner to share tips, resources to prevent older driver crashes*

**Columbus, Ohio** – Because being able to get around in the community is critical for older Ohioans to remain independent and healthy, the Ohio Department of Aging and the Ohio Department of Transportation are partnering to increase awareness of available resources for older drivers during **Older Driver Safety Awareness Week**, Dec. 3-7, 2018.

Drivers age 65 and older represent the fastest-growing segment of licensed drivers in Ohio and across the nation. While older drivers are among the safest drivers on our roads, they may be more likely to be seriously injured in a crash. Ohio has seen four consecutive years of rising traffic deaths involving drivers age 65 and older.

“The ability to get around safely in their neighborhoods allows older Ohioans to continue to feel connected and access opportunities to contribute to their communities,” said Beverley Laubert, director of the Ohio Department of Aging. “To maintain their mobility, older Ohioans should become aware of their changing abilities, understand the factors that can increase the risk of a crash and learn about resources in their communities to maintain their driving ability or find alternatives to driving.”

“There are many state and local programs and resources that can help older Ohio drivers stay safe on the road, as well as find alternatives to driving if they feel they can no longer do so safely,” added Jerry Wray, director of the Ohio Department of Transportation. “Doing so not only helps them maintain their independence, but also reduces risks to themselves and others.”

Normal aging may increase common risk factors for roadway accidents, including changes in vision, hearing, strength, visibility, reflexes and memory. Medical conditions and certain medications also may impact the ability to drive safely. Older drivers also may drive older vehicles that no longer fit their needs (e.g., too big or too small, or seats, steering wheel and mirrors do not adjust sufficiently). Finally, a fear of driving and traffic can increase the risk of a crash.

**Tips for older driver safety:**

* Stay aware of your changing physical, vision and hearing abilities and adjust your driving habits accordingly. Exercise regularly to increase and maintain your strength and flexibility.
* Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any medical conditions you have or medications you take could make it unsafe to drive.
* Try to do most of your driving during daylight and in good weather. Avoid busy roadways and rush hours whenever possible.
* Plan your route before you drive and choose routes with well-lit streets, intersections with left turn signals and easy parking.
* Avoid distractions while driving, including talking or texting on a cell phone, eating, or listening to a loud radio. In-car conversations can also be distracting.
* Leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front of you so that you can react if the other driver stops or slows suddenly.
* Do not drive too slowly, as this can be as unsafe as speeding.

The Ohio Department of Aging offers a webpage (www.aging.ohio.gov/transportation) of transportation and driving tips and resources for older adults. The page includes a link to “Stay Fit to Drive,” a publication of the Ohio Department of Transportation that includes statistics about older driver crashes and tips to reduce key risk factors.

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