

DID YOU KNOW???

OLDER DRIVER ROAD TESTS CUT CRASHES IN ILLINOIS

Normally, after obtaining a NYS driver's license, it must be renewed every eight years and includes passing a visual acuity (eye) test. There are no old-age restrictions on licensure in New York; for example, you could be 88 years old and renew for an additional eight years, which would put you at age 96 before renewal is again required. However, not all states are this lenient.

Per mile traveled, older drivers crash more often than middle-age adults, though not as often as young drivers, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) in the February issue of "Status Report". Concerns about age-related mental, visual and physical impairments have prompted many states to establish shorter license renewal cycles for older drivers and to require eye exams at renewal.

Illinois is the only state that currently has a road-test requirement for older drivers. The requirement applies to all drivers age 75 and older. All Illinois drivers 80 and younger must renew their licenses every four years, not eight like New York. Drivers 81-86 must renew every two years, while those 87 and older are required to renew annually. A road test is required for drivers 75 and older at renewal.

The state's more stringent requirements have resulted in fewer older people driving than otherwise would be expected, according to an analysis by the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI). Those older drivers who do remain on the roads are somewhat less risky than older drivers in nearby states. "The unique mix of regulations in Illinois appears to reduce crash risk, and it seems to do that by getting the riskiest folks off the road," says HLDI Senior Vice President Matt Moore.

The goal of Illinois' road-test requirement isn't to discourage seniors in general from driving, but rather to get risky drivers off the road. The crucial question HLDI sought to answer was whether there are fewer crashes as a result of the policy.

By comparing claim rates in Illinois with those of the neighboring states, HLDI was able to determine that claims for vehicle damage and claims under bodily injury liability, which covers injuries to people in other vehicles, as well as pedestrians and bicyclists, were lower than would have been expected for drivers 75 and older.

Are the Illinois requirements for license renewal scary for older drivers? The answer is likely yes, especially in rural Franklin County where public transportation is at a minimum. However, we must weigh the increased risk of older drivers that are unable to demonstrate the ability to drive safely during their road test, and if they don't meet minimum standards, they should not be allowed to drive – that goes for all drivers.

Thanks go to the IIHS for the information in this article. For more information on traffic law and safety, go to the traffic safety board's web site at: www.franklincony.org and click on "Traffic Safety Board" under departments then look for Did You Know articles under "services". You may also email me at: dwerner151@verizon.net