

Older drivers: Don't get caught in the dark

Written by George Rowan

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(NNPA) - The end of Daylight Savings time on November 1, 2009 doesn't just mean you're getting an extra hour of sleep. Setting clocks back one hour also means an extra hour of night driving, which can be problematic for everyone, particularly older drivers.

Even on familiar roads, motorists should use caution and watch for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists who will be less visible, especially during the first week of the time change. AARP urges all drivers to consider the link between night visibility and safe driving. If you have trouble seeing well at night, get your vision checked and consider taking a driver safety course to learn more about how to compensate in dark conditions.

To focus attention on roadway safety, AARP is proclaiming this November Driver Safety Month. Since folks will be driving more at night, AARP offers the following tips:

- See and be seen. Get your headlights checked, and turn them on one hour before sunset and keep them on one hour after sunrise to ensure maximum visibility.
- Stay alert on the road. With reduced visibility, it's important to reduce your speed, be extra alert, and maintain a three-second following distance.
- Recognize and prevent drowsiness. The change in time can throw off our internal clock and may cause drowsiness so run errands in the morning when you are fresher and more alert.

- Avoid sun glare. You may need to adjust to early morning or late afternoon sun glare that can cause reflections off car windows and hoods and decrease your visibility.

Now celebrating its 30th Anniversary, the AARP Driver Safety Program has provided instruction to more than 12 million participants nationwide seeking to refresh their driving skills. The no-test course updates drivers' knowledge about relevant laws and offers strategies to compensate for age-related changes that affect driving ability.

The course also includes a section on assessing driving abilities, and since November is also National Caregiver Month, now may be a good time to have a "family conversation" about driving to help ensure your loved one stays safe on the road.

Depending on insurance providers and state regulations, graduates of the AARP Driver Safety Program courses – both classroom and online – may be eligible to receive a discount on their auto insurance premiums. All participants should check with their provider for further details.

For information on local courses, please call 1-888-227-7669 or visit us at www.aarp.org/drive. For more information about AARP's online course, please visit www.aarp.org/drive/online.

George Rowan is a member of the AARP board of directors.