

Resources

on Dementia and Driving

IACP Alzheimer's Initiatives – IACP offers a variety of tools and resources including evaluative materials for law enforcement and caregivers, a model policy on missing persons with Alzheimer's disease, a training key, fact sheet on locative technologies, and training videos for law enforcement. www.theiacp.org/alzheimers

National Highway Traffic Safety Association – Resources on older driver issues include fact sheets, studies, a compendium of older driver programs, and targeted resources for caregivers, medical professionals, and law enforcement. <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Older+Drivers>

Alzheimer's Association Dementia and Driving Resource Center – Here you can find videos and resources about dangerous driving warning signs, tips for caregivers, and driver evaluation tools. <http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-and-driving.asp>

American Association of Retired Persons – AARP offers an online seminar on talking with older drivers. <http://www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/we-need-to-talk/>



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

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IDENTIFYING AND HELPING

a Driver with Alzheimer's Disease

*Tips for Law Enforcement and
Motorist Assist Workers*



As many as 5.1 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease or related dementias and many of them are still driving. Listed inside are possible ways to identify a person whose driving may be impaired due to Alzheimer's disease or dementia and tips to help you respond appropriately. If you notice these warning signs, you should consider asking additional questions to further assess the person's capacity to drive and take further action to resolve the call by contacting local law enforcement.



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Warning Signs:

- Difficulty pulling over to the side of the road safely.
 - Was the person able to get the car to a safe stopping point on his or her own?
- Lost or disoriented behavior.
 - When asked “Where are you going today?” can the person readily respond?
 - Does the location to which they say they are headed make sense for where they are and the route they are taking?
- Shuffle in the person’s walk or gait. (*Note: Not all people with Alzheimer’s disease exhibit a shuffle or reduced gait.*)
- Defensive or agitated demeanor.
 - Confusion and frustration from being lost causes people with dementia to become agitated or defensive.
- Vague answers or answers that do not match the question.
 - For example, you ask the person about their vehicle and he or she responds “I am going to my sister’s house.”
 - Also be aware of answers that seem vague, such as “I’m just going around the corner.”
- Issues with giving the correct date, time, and year.
 - Avoid asking “reality check” questions or filling in the blanks, as this may agitate the person.

Never provide directions if a person seems disoriented or confused, as he or she may not realize that he/she is lost.

What to do:

- Approach the person from the front, so he or she can see you coming. Maintain eye contact – if possible, remove your hat or sunglasses.
- Introduce yourself and explain that you are there to help.
- Remain calm; smile, and use a friendly voice.
- Speak slowly, ask simple questions, and allow additional time for response.
- Check for a tracking device or MedicAlert + Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return ID.
- Be prepared for sudden mood changes.
- Change the topic to something pleasant, if the person becomes agitated.
- Avoid touching the person without asking or explaining.
- Provide security and comfort (i.e., blanket, water, or a safe place to sit.)

Many who become lost while driving may continue driving until the vehicle runs out of gas.

Working with Law Enforcement Partners:

While the goal of a standard motorist assist call is to get the driver back on the road quickly, if you are assisting a person with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia you may need to work with law enforcement to help keep that driver off the road and get the person home safely.

A law enforcement officer can:

- Check for an active missing person alert.
- Contact the person’s family/caregiver to ensure safe transit home.
- Issue a citation if a driving violation occurred. It can be helpful to establish a record of driving incidents to help caregivers understand a pattern of declining abilities and the possible need for driver re-evaluation.

