

Gift Ideas for Senior Drivers: Give the Gift of Safety — AAA Recommendations

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If Santa Claus -- the world's most popular senior driver -- is smart, he'll upgrade his sleigh with simple modifications to improve his safety, reduce his crash risk and extend his time behind the reins.

The Man in Red should also urge other senior drivers to follow suit by modifying their rides with comfy steering wheel covers, cushy seat pads, and elevated pedal extenders — all recommendations from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety's newest research.

— *an announcement from AAA Northeast, an affiliate of the American Automobile Association*

The research recommends senior drivers 65 years of age and over -- who are among the most vulnerable crash risks on the road -- to consider making these and other adaptations to their vehicles since these folks are more likely to be involved in crashes.

The research also suggests senior drivers aren't taking advantage of inexpensive features as ways to improve their safety. In fact, the research found fewer than 90% of senior drivers reported they used any of these devices in their vehicles:

- Cushions and seat pads to improve sight lines and helps alleviate back or hip pain;
- Convex/multifaceted mirrors to improve visibility and minimize blind spots;
- Pedal extensions to help maintain a safe distance from the steering wheel's airbag;
- Steering wheel covers to improve driver grip; and
- Hand controls to perform vehicle maneuvers and functions without the use of lower extremities.

The new research, *In-Vehicle Technologies, Vehicle Adaptions and Older Drivers: Use, Learning and Perceptions*, is the first phase in the Foundation's Longitudinal Research on Aging Drivers (LongROAD) project to create the most comprehensive senior driver database in existence.

It also will provide critical research to better understand the risks and transportation needs of America's aging population.

The study reported more than 70% of senior drivers interviewed said they experienced various health conditions that impact muscles and bones such as arthritis, hip/knee replacement and joint pains.

See also: [The AAA Senior Driving web pages](#)

For example, certain devices such as steer wheel covers can help lessen the impact of arthritis; while larger mirrors and assistive devices on seats can help with limited neck mobility and increase a driver's line of sight over the steering wheel.

AAA urges drivers to consult with a trained occupational therapist, especially those trained in driving rehabilitation, to guide them in making adjustments to their vehicle.

AAA also offers a [Smart Features for Older Drivers tool](#), which can help senior drivers identify in-expensive devices and vehicle features that optimize their comfort and safety.