Florida Number One in Senior Citizen Auto Accident Fatalities

The Sunshine States holds a rather dubious honor: It is the state with the most senior citizen traffic fatalities in the country, even though it does not have the highest senior population in the country, a distinction that goes to California, which has over three million residents over the age of 65.

Florida's problem, if left unresolved, will increase as the baby boomer generation ages. Currently, drivers over the age of 65 account for one-fifth of the state's drivers, but this number is expected to reach 25 percent by 2030.

A study by TRIP, a national transportation group, found that in Florida in 2010, 271 senior drivers died in accidents and 503 of fatal car accidents in the state involved a senior driver. Nationally, senior citizens account for only eight percent of miles driven, but 17 percent of all traffic fatalities.

Several factors are thought to contribute to high rates of traffic accidents and fatalities involving senior drivers. Roadway design, inadequate driver testing and lack of alternative transportation make roads less safe for aged drivers and put them and others at risk.

Fortunately, there is a task force in Florida that is researching senior road safety and identifying ways to raise the quality of life for seniors, including driving conditions. The Florida Department of Transportation has also started several initiatives to widen roadway stripes so they are more visible, use larger lettering on signs, increase the size of stop and yield signs and install pedestrian crosswalks that use a countdown.

These initiatives correspond with TRIP's recommendations to improve senior driving safety. In addition to the steps FDOT is taking, TRIP recommends that municipalities and states make road curves more gradual, widen or add left turn lanes, increase merge ramp length, integrate rumble strips to alert drivers when they are reaching the edge of the road, brighten lighting and include pedestrian refuge islands in the design of intersections. Non-physical recommendations include improved driver education and the promotion of seatbelt use.

South Florida's citizens are also working together to address road safety. In early March, the transportation advocacy group Safe Streets Miami held a forum to discuss how to make the streets of Miami-Dade safe for all users, including drivers and pedestrians.

Not only will these improvements help senior drivers, they will help all drivers stay safe on the state's roadways. If you or a loved one have been involved in an accident with a senior driver, please contact an experienced personal injury attorney.