



## U3AM at Home

### SAFER SMARTER ROAD USE

Hoping that you are all keeping fit and well during this period of social distancing and staying at home as much as possible. Pray that no one has succumbed to this virus. Whether we are walking for exercise, or taking that short drive or walking to the shops or visiting as carers, we must not forget to be safer and smarter road users.

Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020 highlights the following:

***(a) Every two hours in Victoria, someone is killed or suffers life-changing injuries from a road crash....People on country roads are..... killed at almost four times the rate of people using city roads.....In the next 10 years, 2500 people will die and 50,000 will be hospitalised***

***(b) Drivers over 60 are the fastest growing age group of drivers on the road. They are involved in 19% of deaths and 17% of serious injuries and are more likely to crash in 60km/hr and 70km/hr speed zones.***

**266 people lost their lives on Victorian roads in 2019. 56 were older road users (pedestrians, drivers, passengers) over the age of 75, the highest number compared to any other age group.**

There are four factors involved in crashes:

- 1.Roads – road conditions and unsafe roads
- 2.People – we make mistakes and can't predict road conditions
3. Speeds – speeds do not suit road conditions
- 4.Vehicles – unsafe/unroadworthy vehicles

So how can we be better road users?

#### **1.Roads**

Roads and roadsides serve two important safety purposes:

- (a) They **guide** our driving and road use in ways to avoid being involved in a serious crash; and
- (b) They can **protect** us from road trauma if we make a mistake.

For example, **roundabouts** slow us down thus reducing the chance of a crash. If we collide with another vehicle, it will be at an acute angle, hence the crash will be less severe. **Traffic lights** control our movements at intersections so that everyone has a chance to make it safely across the intersection. **Speed signs** and other **warning signs (eg slipperiness when wet signs, road works signs)** tell us the condition of the road may be unsafe during rainfall or there are workmen on the road or the road is being repaired so it is in a poorer condition than normal - so we need to slow down. **Speed limits** are set taking into account a number of factors including abutting properties, road condition, type of road, traffic volumes and crash numbers.

We share the roads with other road users so we need to **know the Road Rules**. The Road Rules govern how we should be using the roads so we can be as safe as possible.

The RACV has a Road Rules Quiz comprising what they think are the most misunderstood Road Rules. Why don't you try and test yourself to see how in touch you are with the Road Rules? The website address is <https://www.racv.com.au/on-the-road/driving-maintenance/road-safety/road-rules.html> . There are also many articles regarding safer road users, safer vehicles and safer speeds on the same website under road safety.

You can also sign up to get Road Rule updates from VicRoads. <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/road-rules>. You will get an email when there are changes to the Road Rules and other related articles.

## 2. People

An older driver is generally defined as anyone over the age of 75. In Victoria, licence retention is based on a person's behaviour and medical fitness to drive – not age. However, crash risk increases significantly around 75 years.

### *Why is this?*

- Older drivers or pedestrians are more frail.
- Many of us have medical conditions and take medications.
- We probably respond slower to situations.
- We are likely to fail to select safe gaps at intersections and multi-lane roads.

### *Medications*

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) has a very useful summary of the effects of most medications on driving. Download the pdf from their website <https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/safe-driving/older-drivers/driving-and-pharmacy-medications>

You can also read up on Older Driver Safety on the same website <https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/safe-driving/older-drivers>

### *Self Assessment of our Fitness to Drive*

VicRoads has a number of articles about older drivers. In particular, it is useful to read the following article "Am I still fit to drive? Aging and Safe Driving" and to do the self assessment to determine how fit we are to drive safely: <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/-/media/files/documents/safety-and-road-rules/older-drivers/fit-to-drive>

### *Walking*

As we get older, we have been asked to ensure we keep fit and exercise so all of us try to walk more. As pedestrians, we need to be extra careful on our roads. Please take some time to read the section on Pedestrian Safety on the VicRoads website <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/pedestrian-safety>. You may be surprised how much we can still learn about safe walking.

## 3. Speeds

Small increases in **travel** speed equal large increases in the crash risk. Travelling 5km/hr over the speed limit in a 60 km/hr zone **DOUBLES** your risk of crashing. Small increases in **impact** speed can mean large increases in risk severity and injury outcomes ie the harder you hit, the greater the crash severity and the greater the chance of being seriously injured or killed.

Our bodies can only withstand a certain level of physical force before death or serious injury can occur. The speeds before the risk of death or serious injury significantly increases are as follows:

- Head on – up to impact speed of 70km/hr
- Side impact – up to impact speed of 50 km/hr
- Side Impact with tree up to impact speed of 30 km/hr
- **Pedestrian – unprotected road user – up to impact speed of 30 km/hr**

## 4. Vehicles

It's important to ensure that our car gives us the best protection when we are on the road.

For **new** vehicles, the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) provides information on the level of occupant and pedestrian protection by different car models. ANCAP crash tests **new** cars in the laboratory, in different scenarios, to determine ratings. ANCAP ratings are between 1 to 5. Safety experts recommend that our cars should have at least a 4 star rating. Please refer to <http://www.howsafeisyourcar.com.au/> under the Safety Features tab to read the TAC's "How Safe is Your Car – Buyers Guide" and to assess your Car's Safety Rating.

For **used** vehicles, the Used Car Safety Rating (UCSR) helps us choose safer second hand cars. UCSR are based on real world car crashes in Australia and New Zealand where someone was killed or seriously injured. Around 5.5million police reported crashes have been analysed for this program. You can also find information on UCSR on the same website listed above.

In conclusion, I hope the above material gives you some ideas on how to be a Safer Smarter Road User. For those coming to my class in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Term (if we get back to classes), we can have further discussion on many more aspects of Safer Road Use. Meanwhile, take care everyone during these challenging times and if you are driving or walking, please stay safe on our roads. I pray we all get back to U3AM healthy and safe in the foreseeable future. Best wishes everyone.

Patricia Liew

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