



OP Safety of Elder Drivers

FLORIDA OCCUPANT PROTECTION COALITION

NOVEMBER 20 AND 21, 2019



Seat belts and older drivers

02:59

[Click on the link to view video](#)

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/when-seat-belts-pose-a-safety-hazard/>

FOPC Mini Meeting

An element of FOPC Action Plan 5.1c is to develop a reference card which will help law enforcement officers recognize when restraints are not being used properly regarding elder drivers

A meeting was planned with FOPC member and D4 LEL Charles Kane, FOPC member and CarFit expert and national representative Fran Carlin-Rogers and SMFL Coalition member and D1 LEL Tom Arsenault to discuss the priorities of Occupant Protection regarding elder drivers

Discussion



Our discussion during this meeting focused on what information we want to pass along to law enforcement for consideration while engaged with an elder driver



In the NHTSA Publication – “Occupant Protection Issues Among Older Drivers and Passengers,” NHTSA focuses on drivers **65 and older**



We identified several points for consideration

Use of Seat Belt



Is the driver wearing their seat belt. Yes or No. If not; why not? The law enforcement officer should be sensitive to the reasons.



Do they realize Seat Belts must be used with Airbags

Each one will provide protection but not enough by itself
Use of seat belts with airbags provides the greatest level of protection from injury



Are they wearing their seat belt correctly? Yes or no. If not; why not?

Use of Seat Belt



Is there a medical reason for not using a seat belt



Driver may wish to consult with their doctor



Mobility – Unable to reach for the belt



Commercial remedies can be purchased off the shelf

Steering Wheel Angle

The steering wheel housing with the airbag in it's center, should be adjusted so the center is aimed toward the driver's chest and Not the head.

Steering Wheel Distance

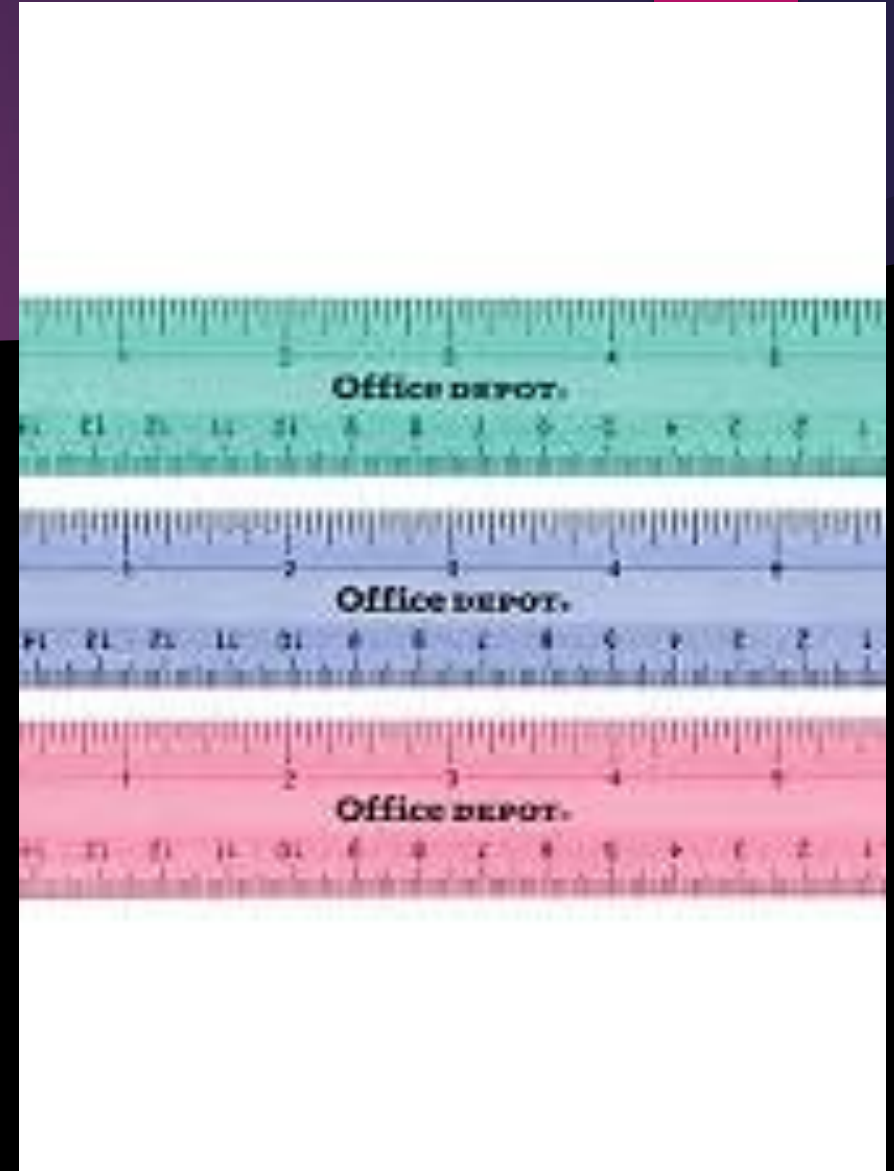
Distance between the driver's chest or torso and the steering wheel/air bag.

- ▶ The golden rule is 10 inches or more between the driver and the air bag
 - ▶ Most vehicles have forward and rearward adjustability
- ▶ While checking for this measurement try to ensure the driver's line of site is at least three inches above the steering wheel
 - ▶ Many vehicles today have height adjustability



Head Restraint

- ▶ The head restraint is a safety device used to prevent whiplash and resulting neck injuries. It is in the correct position when it is within 2 ½ inches or closer from the center of the back area of the driver's head
 - ▶ Touching the back of the head is OK



Remedies



SIMPLE
ADJUSTMENTS TO
SEAT HEIGHT AND
OR DISTANCE
TO/FROM STEERING
WHEEL



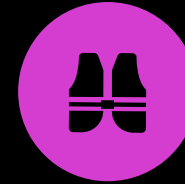
REFERRAL TO CARFIT
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[HTTPS://WWW.CAR-
FIT.ORG/](https://www.car-fit.org/)



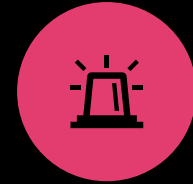
REFERRAL TO DRIVER
REHAB SPECIALIST



EDUCATION



SAFE MOBILITY FOR
LIFE – RESOURCES



OVERT THE COUNTER
SOLUTIONS

NHTSA Publication



NHTSA Publication – “Occupant Protection Issue Among Older Drivers and Passengers”



The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is concerned about highway safety issues for older adults and is interested in understanding what contributes to seat belt use or nonuse among people 65 and older.



Report Date 2008

Law Enforcement Considerations

When encountering Elder Drivers

Is the driver wearing their seat belt?
If not, ask why. Be sensitive. If they have a medical reason; refer them to their doctor.

Does the driver know that seat belts must be used in conjunction with airbags, and failing to use a seat belt can cause greater injury from the Airbags.

Are they wearing their seat belt correctly?

There should be at least ten inches between the driver's chest or torso away from the airbag to reduce injuries from the airbag.

Can the driver see over the steering wheel. The driver's sightline should be at least 3 inches above the top of the steering wheel.

The steering wheel housing with the airbag in its center, should be adjusted so the center is aimed toward the driver's chest and

The head restraint is a safety device used to prevent whiplash and resulting neck injuries. The correct position is when it is within 2 ½ inches or closer from the center of the back area of the driver's head. Touching the back of the head is OK

A great resource for senior drivers can be found at www.seniordriving.aaa.com
For a quick and comprehensive check of an elder driver's safe fit in a vehicle, drivers can check out CarFit at: www.car-fit.org

Some issues may be mobility issues such as; a driver unable to reach for the seat belt may be remedied with a simple commercial solution from a local retailer or online



The Florida Occupant Protection Coalition (FOPC) was formed to identify and prioritize Florida's most pressing occupant protection issues.
www.foccupantprotection.com

