



Staying Safe:

What to Expect When Your
Medical Condition Has Been
Reported to PennDOT



Introduction

Your Medical Condition Has Been Reported ... Sorting Through the Feelings and the Facts

So... you've received a letter from PennDOT telling you that your medical condition has been reported.

Maybe you knew that such a letter might be coming. Maybe you didn't know, and you are wondering who reported your medical condition to PennDOT, why they would do that, and what happens next.

It's a Matter of Safety – Yours and Everyone Else's

First, it's important to understand that if this was done, someone with knowledge of your driving or your medical condition is concerned about your safety while driving. Health care providers in Pennsylvania have the legal responsibility to report a patient's medical condition if that condition could impair the patient's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. So medical reporting by a health care provider is not a judgment on you; they're just following the law and doing their job.

Medical reporting is an important part of PennDOT's effort to improve highway safety for everyone. Reporting assists PennDOT in determining whether those applying for a driver's license or those already possessing a driver's license are medically qualified to safely operate a motor vehicle. Without the cooperation of these medical providers, thousands of medically impaired drivers would remain undetected by PennDOT.

In addition to reports from health care providers, police and accident reports on drivers of all ages help PennDOT determine who should be evaluated. Also, PennDOT receives letters from concerned family members and others.

Second, it's important to understand that receiving this letter doesn't necessarily mean that your driver's license will be taken away. Many drivers who are reported to PennDOT are able to address their medical issues, improve their driving skills or modify their driving habits, and continue on the road.

What it does mean is that PennDOT will be evaluating the report that was made, and may take further steps to learn more about your ability to drive safely.

Finally, you should know that PennDOT's medical evaluation efforts are not exclusively focused on senior citizens. Health care providers must report anyone over the age of 15 that has a medical condition that may impair his/her ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. Additionally, each month in Pennsylvania, drivers over the age of 45 are randomly selected before their license is due to renew to undergo a vision and a physical exam by health care providers of their own choice.



You've Been Reported – What Can You Expect Next?

A report made to PennDOT triggers an evaluation process. PennDOT will review the information it has received and may contact you to obtain further information.

Based on all the information submitted, PennDOT makes the decision to do one of four things:

1. Restrictions on your driving may be added or deleted;
2. Your license may be recalled or restored;
3. You may be requested to provide additional medical information and/or complete a driver's examination; or
4. No action may be taken.



Can You Get Your License Back?

Certain medical conditions prevent the safe operation of a motor vehicle. However, in certain instances, these conditions can be corrected or controlled. Once the medical condition is corrected or controlled, it is possible to regain a driver's license or remove a restriction. You will need to contact PennDOT for information about what you need to do to have your license restored. Your doctor should be able to tell you if your condition is temporary or can be controlled or resolved.

You may also appeal the recall or suspension of your driving privilege through the Court of Common Pleas in your county of residence.

Ways You Can Maintain Good Driving Habits or Improve Your Driving

Whatever the status of PennDOT's evaluation of your driving readiness is, it's important to follow up with your physician or other health care professional. Talk with them about your concerns and what your options are for correcting the problems that led to the report being made. Be open to conversations with adult children and friends to discuss your driving and exchange perspectives. With more older drivers on the road, you're not alone in having to make decisions about limiting or stopping driving – so reach out.

Most of us could improve our driving skills through very simple actions. It is important to always be aware, look ahead and pay extra attention to driving conditions, especially when driving at night, during rush hour and in bad weather. Many older drivers choose to avoid driving in these conditions altogether to reduce their risk. Also, a driver who is tired will have a slower reaction time. Safety belts are a must. Use of cell phones is a major distraction while driving and should only be limited to use during an emergency.

It's also good to keep learning everything you can about how to drive better and take advantage of the latest safety features available. Many organizations in Pennsylvania offer driving refresher in-class and/or online courses, as well as information and tips for mature drivers to stay mobile and safe. Taking a refresher course may even get you a reduction on your auto insurance premium. A number of these resources are provided at the back of this guide.

Dealing with No Longer Driving

If, after the evaluation process, you have found out that you will have to stop driving altogether, it's common to experience feelings of loss and anxiety. For many of us, driving is how we get around and connect with the outside world – it's our independence.

At this time, it's important to reach out to and be open to conversations with your family, friends and neighbors who can help, as well as to other resources.

For example, are there evening social activities that could be moved to daytime? Or ones where you can get a ride with a friend, or host yourself with help from a family member? This may be time to plan for how family members or a neighbor can help with routine errands such as grocery shopping. Or you may want to look into delivery services to reduce the errands.





Are there places you regularly go where you'd be willing to consider using transportation assistance from a local agency? Older Pennsylvanians are also eligible for the Free Transit Program and the Shared Ride Program. A link to these services through the Pennsylvania Department of Aging is listed at the end of this guide. From that link, you can look up what services are available in your county.

Take a look at your daily routine, what your priorities are, and how you can start planning to get around in some different ways, so that you can still partake in activities you enjoy while staying safe.

For more information, please contact PennDOT at 717-412-5300 or you may write to:

The Bureau of Driver Licensing

P.O. Box 68682

Harrisburg, PA 17106-8682

Mature Driver Improvement Courses

Under PA law individuals may be entitled to at least a 5 percent discount on their entire automobile insurance policy if they are 55 or older and successfully complete a driver improvement course approved by PennDOT. Those interested should check with their insurance carrier for the specifics of their program.

Please refer to the PennDOT website www.penndot.pa.gov to see all state approved courses that are held at various locations throughout the Commonwealth as well as Online.

All approved courses specifically address the safety needs of the mature driver. There are no written or practical driving tests required. The course fees are moderate, but vary with each organization.



More Safety Resources for Senior Drivers

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)



717-412-5300 • 1101 S. Front Street • Harrisburg, PA 17104

www.penndot.gov/safety

The Traffic Safety and Driver Topics section of this website contains an array of information pertaining to safely operating a motor vehicle.

www.dmv.pa.gov/Driver-Services/Mature-Drivers

The Mature Driver section of PennDOT's website offers resources for drivers including safety tips, improvement courses and licensing laws as well as information for the health care community and medical reporting tools.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)



1-888-327-4236

www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Older+Drivers

NHTSA offers guides, research reports and toolkits for mature drivers and those around them, including family and friends, medical professionals and law enforcement officers.

Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA)



717-783-1550 • 555 Walnut Street, 5th Fl. • Harrisburg, PA 17101

www.aging.pa.gov/aging-services/transportation

The Aging Services/ Transportation section of this website provides details on the PA Free Transit Program for individuals 65+, the Shared Ride Program, and also offers additional resources and links.

CarFit

www.car-fit.org

CarFit is an educational program that offers older adults the opportunity to check how well their personal vehicles “fit” them.

The CarFit program also provides information and materials on community- specific resources that could enhance their safety as drivers, and/or increase their mobility in the community.



The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED)

Driver Rehabilitation Specialists work with people of all ages and abilities, exploring alternative transportation solutions for drivers with special needs or who may need



to use special equipment to continue to drive. This includes helping older drivers and their families master the challenges of diminishing driving skills. Please visit www.aded.net and click on Directory & Services, then click on DRS or CDRS Provider Search.

PA Yellow Dot

www.pennidot.gov/TravelInPA/Pages/Yellow-Dot.aspx

This program assists citizens in the “golden hour” of emergency care following a traffic accident when they may not be able to communicate their needs themselves. Placing a Yellow Dot decal in your vehicle’s rear window alerts first responders to check your glove compartment for vital information to ensure you receive the medical attention you need. The program is a cooperative effort between PennDOT, the Department of Health and Aging, the State Police, the Turnpike Commission, first responders and local law enforcement.



The Emergency Contact Information Program

The Emergency Contact Information Program was developed to allow your emergency contact information to be quickly available to law enforcement through a secure online database. Just



**Upload Emergency
Contact Information**

visit www.dmv.pa.gov and click on the icon you see to the right to use your Pennsylvania Driver’s License or ID information to enter emergency contacts to speak for you if ever you can’t speak for yourself.

About PennDOT and our Seniors Driving Safely Series

PennDOT oversees a breadth of programs and policies that ensure that the movement of people and goods within the state is safe, reliable, and efficient. We oversee an ongoing investment in the integrity of Pennsylvania's highway and bridge infrastructure. PennDOT is directly responsible for nearly 40,000 miles of highway and roughly 25,000 bridges. We also administer the state's more than 11 million vehicle registrations and 8.9 million driver's licenses and oversee safety and emission inspection programs.

While PennDOT strives to set the standard for an organized transportation structure and maintain a reliable infrastructure throughout Pennsylvania, our mission cannot be completed without the compliance and cooperation of those who utilize and operate within our state's roadways and multimodal systems. Our *Seniors Driving Safely Series* is one facet of our effort to help educate, guide, remind, assist, and protect all Pennsylvanians in getting wherever they need to go – safely.