

SENIORS IN ACTION

PROVIDING MOBILITY FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS

Have you ever thought about what would happen if the transportation you use is no longer an option? How would you continue to maintain your independence so that you could continue with your daily routines? Who would you turn to for assistance? People often look to friends or relatives to assist with transportation – this may be a good option for you, but it is not always the most convenient for you or for them.

Thinking ahead to alternative transportation options can give you peace of mind should your current means of getting around in your community change in the future. In Fallon County we are fortunate to have an active transportation program provided through Fallon County Council on Aging’s Transportation System. This transportation program is available to ALL residents of Fallon County whether young or old.

Providing local service Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. we currently give rides primarily within the Baker city limits. We also are available to provide transportation, on a coordinated basis, to Plevna residents for their convenience in coming to Baker, whether it be for lunch at the hospital dining room, medical appointments, or other errands.

For more information on this and other services that Fallon County Council on Aging’s Transportation System provides, contact Carla at 778-3595.



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AARP DRIVING COURSE OFFERED

Cars have changed. So have traffic rules, driving conditions, and the roads you travel every day. Some drivers age 50+ have never looked back since they got their first driver's licenses, but even the most experienced drivers can benefit from brushing up on their driving skills.

In 2014, AARP debuted its “Smart Driver Course”, a new and improved driver safety program that teaches the rules of the road, defensive driving techniques, and gives special focus to areas where studies have shown older drivers could benefit from additional training. By taking a driver safety course you'll learn how to operate your vehicle more safely in today's increasingly challenging driving environment. You'll learn how you can manage and accommodate common age-related changes in vision, hearing and reaction time. In addition, you'll learn:

- How to minimize the effects of dangerous blind spots
- How to maintain the proper following distance behind another car
- The safest ways to change lanes and make turns at busy intersections
- Proper use of safety belts, air bags, anti-lock brakes, and new technologies used in cars
- Ways to monitor your own and others' driving skills and capabilities
- The effects of medications on driving
- The importance of eliminating distractions, such as eating, smoking, and cell-phone use

After completing the course, you will have a greater appreciation of driving challenges and of how you can avoid potential collisions and injuries to yourself and others.

Fallon County Council on Aging is sponsoring the AARP Driver Safety Program on Saturday, March 18 from 9 a.m.—1 p.m. at the Baker Senior Center.

Although the course is geared to drivers age 50 and older, the course is open to people of all ages.

Although AARP membership is not required to take the course, individuals who show their AARP membership card when registering will receive a \$5 discount on the cost of the course. Cost for AARP members is \$15, while cost for non-AARP members is \$20.

We urge you to participate in this worthwhile program. Preregistration is required. To preregister call 778-3595.

DRIVING SAFELY AS WE AGE

One of the markers along the path of aging is when to decide to stop driving. This is a very difficult decision, even more so because cars are so important in our culture. Men often strongly identify with driving as does anyone who loves the independence that you feel with the ability to travel wherever you want to. So we often resist, perhaps not realizing that we are no longer driving safely. It also doesn't occur to us that in our older years this actually might be the time to improve our driving ability.

“I only make right turns,”

said my 89-year-old friend when asked to what he credits his accident-free driving record of the last decade. Like most seniors, “Fred” has modified his driving habits as he's aged to accommodate his changing physical abilities.

The ability to get around is a top priority for people as they age, second only to financial security and health-care costs, according to a study by AAA. Without ways to get around, numerous studies show, seniors' health and well-being can decline dramatically if they become isolated from friends, family, cultural events and medical care.

It's no wonder some seniors drive longer than they should, putting themselves and others at risk.

A growing issue

People over the age of 65 are the fastest growing population group in the United States. By the year 2020, it is estimated that one in every five drivers will be over the age of 65. According to AAA, senior drivers are at a higher risk of having a serious collision per mile driven than any other age group, except for those under age 25. Drivers

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One of the best ways to improve your driving skills is to increase the flexibility of the joints in the neck.

A big limitation on our driving abilities as we age comes because it gets harder to move our neck freely to adequately observe our surroundings.

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in their late 70s have about the same number of injury-related crashes per mile driven as drivers in their early 20s. And drivers age 85 and older are injured or killed in crashes at a higher rate than any other age group, due to the increased fragility that comes with age.

Attention to the issue of older drivers varies greatly from state to state. Some states have special vision and on-road driving tests for elderly drivers, but automatic renewals are the norm in half the country. While many states have policies limiting driving privileges based on medical conditions, few states require doctors to notify the DMV about patients with medical conditions that may impair their driving ability.

Thus, it often falls on adult children, relatives, caregivers and seniors themselves to decide when it's time to re-assess their driving skills.

The warning signs

How do you know if an older driver is still fit to drive? Some of the signs that an older driver needs assistance are that he or she:

- ◆ Neglects to buckle up
- ◆ Has difficulty working the pedals
- ◆ Has trouble merging onto freeways and navigating intersections
- ◆ Has trouble seeing other vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists, especially at night
- ◆ “Overlooks” or ignores stops signs and traffic signals
- ◆ Weaves, straddles lanes or drifts into other lanes without signaling
- ◆ Reacts slowly to the sirens and flashing lights of emergency vehicles
- ◆ Gets lost or disoriented easily, even in familiar places

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Tray Favors**Baker Senior Center****Thursday, March 23****2 p.m.**


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- ◆ Has received two or more tickets or warnings, collisions or “near misses” in the past two years

If you are an older driver, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration suggests asking yourself the following questions to determine if your driving habits need to be changed:

- ◆ Do cars seem to stop suddenly in front of you?
- ◆ Do cars seem to suddenly come out of nowhere?
- ◆ Are other drivers in too big a rush?
- ◆ Do other drivers frequently honk or pass you, even when traffic is moving slowly?
- ◆ Do you sometimes fail to notice a traffic sign?
- ◆ Are roads getting too confusing?
- ◆ Is night driving getting more difficult?

Answering yes to a few of these is a wake-up call that you need to take some special precautions. Limit your night and rush hour driving, leave extra space between your car and cars ahead, and seriously consider signing up for a driving skills assessment and/or refresher course.

Some insurance companies offer reduced premiums to seniors who complete safe driving courses. Check with your insurance provider for details.

Reputable organizations offer senior driving skills assessments, educational programs and interactive exercises that can help seniors hone their driving skills and activate their brains, keeping them safer and on the roads longer.

While many state agencies, universities and private companies offer courses, it is worth noting that AAA and AARP offer outstanding programs.



Cell phones! What a marvelous invention!

However sometimes the reception might not be the best or you just simply can't get through.

If you are trying to reach the transportation program and you “strike-out” for one reason or another, please leave a message. Drivers will return your calls as soon as possible.

DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT FRAUD

Durable medical equipment (DME) companies offer a valuable service by providing wheelchairs, surgical supplies, catheters, and respiratory nebulizers as well as nutrition and tube feeding supplies and other health care equipment. However, many fraudulent DME companies have appeared all across the country.

How the Scam Works

- A fraudulent DME company approaches a fraudulent physician, or uses an unsuspecting physician's stolen identity, to medically certify that a beneficiary needs supplies.
- This same fraudulent DME company may also have stolen, or otherwise purchased, Medicare beneficiary numbers and begin to fraudulently bill Medicare for goods.
- Typically no actual equipment is delivered to the beneficiary. He may not know equipment is being billed in his name.
- Other common costly DME items that are offered include "custom" diabetic shoes, oxygen, nebulizers, and therapeutic mattresses.
- Sometimes the beneficiary is aware of the fraud and is paid a "kickback" in cash for selling his Medicare information.

How to Fight Back

- Do not let anyone except your physician's office handle your Medicare card. If anyone other than your physician's office requests you to provide your Medicare information, do not provide it.
- Never accept "free" medical equipment or services in exchange for your Medicare number. Nothing is ever free.
- Review your Explanation of Benefits paperwork for items that appear that you did not order or receive and report any discrepancies immediately.

If you suspect Medicare fraud, errors, or abuse, address it immediately by taking these steps:

- **Rule out error:** If you have questions about information on yours or your loved one's Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) or Explanation of Benefits (EOB), call the provider or plan and ask for an explanation.
- **Get help from your SMP:** If you are not comfortable calling the provider or plan or if you are not satisfied with their response, your local SMP can help you identify and report fraud schemes and deceptive health care practices, such as illegal marketing or billing for services that were never provided.

For personal assistance with the above steps feel free to contact Carla at 778-3595.

Need A Ride In Fallon County? Need A Ride Out Of Fallon County?

Local & Regional Transportation Available

Local Service: Monday—Saturday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

Regional Service: Miles City Trip—First Wednesday Of Month —\$12.50

Out-of-Town Trip (Location TBA)—Third Wednesday Of Month

Medical Transportation: Within Defined Area—As Needed Basis

For More Information Call 778-3595

LOOK WHO'S CELEBRATING A BIRTHDAY IN MARCH

Arlene Gatzke—Mar. 1

Jan Lovec—Mar. 2

Max Mueller—Mar. 2

Joann Parini—Mar. 2

Eileen Rieger—Mar. 2

Billy Singer—Mar. 3

Ruth Breen—Mar. 4

Terry Curry—Mar. 4

Dennis Koenig—Mar. 4

Marilyn Gawryluk—Mar. 5

Joyce Jardee—Mar. 6

Herbert O'Donnell—Mar. 6

John Medearis—Mar. 7

Mike O'Donnell---Mar. 8

Shane Bettenhausen—Mar. 9

Pat Hanley—Mar. 9

Diane Van Gordon—Mar. 9

David Hall—Mar. 11

Chris Sakelaris—Mar. 12

Jan Singer—Mar. 13

Pat Madler—Mar. 14

Jean Hanratty—Mar. 15

LaDonna

Freimark—Mar. 16

Rita Breitbach—Mar. 17

Leland Gundlach—Mar. 18

Dana Hellyer—Mar. 18

Jan Townsend—Mar. 19

Clarice Tronstad—Mar. 19

Pamela Gutierrez—Mar. 23

Robert Kruger—Mar. 23

Drury Phebus—Mar. 23



Dolores Veroye—Mar. 23

Marvin Schopp—Mar. 26

Lolita Cameron—Mar. 28

Fritz Goerndt—Mar. 30

Eugene Vennes—Mar. 30

Lora Heyen—Mar. 31