



Identifying and Helping a Driver with Alzheimer's Disease or Dementia:

TIPS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

As many as 6.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease or dementia*, and many are still driving. Inside are ways to identify a person whose driving may be impaired due to Alzheimer's disease or dementia and tips to help you respond appropriately. If you notice these warning signs, consider asking additional questions to assess the person's capacity to drive and take further action to resolve the call.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:
www.theiacp.org/projects/home-safe

*From the Alzheimer's Association 2022 Facts & Figures report.

Warning Signs

- Difficulty pulling over to the side of the road safely
 - Was the person able to get the car to a safe stopping point?
- Lost or disoriented behavior
 - When asked, “Where are you going today?” can the person readily respond?
 - Does their stated destination make sense based on where they are and the route they are taking?
- A shuffle in the person’s walk **(Note: Not all people with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia exhibit a shuffle or slow gait.)**
- Defensive or agitated demeanor
 - Confusion and frustration from being lost may cause people with dementia to become agitated or defensive.



NEVER PROVIDE DIRECTIONS IF THE PERSON SEEMS DISORIENTED OR CONFUSED. THEY MAY NOT REALIZE THEY ARE LOST.

- Vague answers or answers that do not match the question
 - For example, when you ask the person about their vehicle, they respond, “I am going to my sister’s house.”
 - Be aware of vague answers like, “I’m just going around the corner.”
- Difficulty determining the date, time, or year
 - Avoid attempting to assist them to determine the correct date, time, or year or arguing to convince them of the correct date, time, or year, as this may agitate the person.

What to Do

- When safe to do so, approach from the front so they can see you coming and, if possible, remove your cover/hat and sunglasses to maintain eye contact.
- Lower the volume on your radio to avoid startling or frightening the person.
- Introduce yourself and explain that you are there to help.
- Speak in a calm, friendly tone. Do not raise your voice or argue.
- Ask one simple question at a time and allow extra response time.
- Check for a tracking device or MedicAlert ID.
- Be prepared for sudden mood or demeanor changes.
- If the person becomes agitated, change the topic to something pleasant.
- Avoid touching the person without asking or explaining.
- Provide security and comfort. (e.g., blanket, water, or a safe place to sit)
- Check for an active missing person or Silver Alert.
- Contact the person's family or caregiver to ensure safe transit home.

For law enforcement: Always document (issue a warning or citation) if a driving violation has occurred. This establishes a record to help caregivers understand a pattern of declining abilities and the possible need for driver re-evaluation.



**MANY WHO BECOME LOST WHILE
DRIVING MAY CONTINUE DRIVING UNTIL
THE VEHICLE RUNS OUT OF GAS.**

Resources on Dementia and Driving

IACP'S HOME SAFE PROJECT – A variety of resources can be found at [www.theiacp.org/projects/home safe](http://www.theiacp.org/projects/home_safe), including podcasts, tools, articles, and webinars related to reducing injury and death of missing individuals with dementia and developmental disabilities who may wander from safe environments.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

OR DEMENTIA – IACP is committed to helping first responders improve their knowledge and skills to enhance their response to community members living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. www.theiacp.org/projects/alzheimers-initiatives

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION DEMENTIA AND DRIVING RESOURCE CENTER

Videos and resources about dangerous driving warning signs, tips for caregivers, and driver evaluation tools. www.alz.org/care/alzheimers_dementia_and_driving.asp

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS –

Online seminar on talking with older drivers. elearn.aarp.org/Listing/5021bd08_f456_4747_8e16_15b18a0a7cd2

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ASSOCIATION –

Resources on older drivers include fact sheets, studies, a compendium of older driver programs, and targeted resources for caregivers, medical professionals, and law enforcement. www.nhtsa.gov/road_safety/older_drivers



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