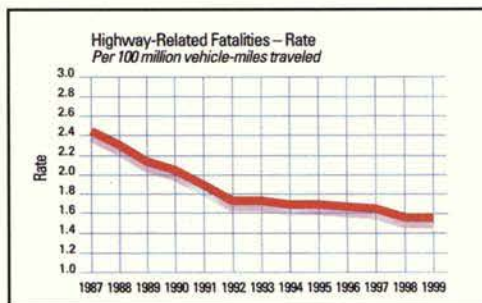
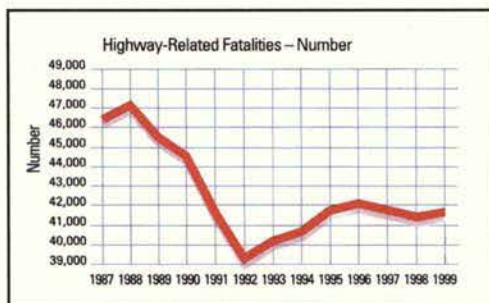


## SAFETY

Safety on our highways is FHWA's top priority. Even though the United States has one of the safest highway systems in the world, some 41,000 Americans died in motor vehicle accidents in 1999. That's more than 100 fatalities a day. Or, to put it another way, it's as if two 747 jumbo jets crashed every single week—all year long. As more people travel more miles on the highways and our older driver population grows, significant improvements in highway safety are essential to continue reducing highway fatalities and injuries.



*Traffic fatalities have shown a marked decrease since the enactment of the Highway Safety Act in 1966.*

The good news is that highway fatalities are coming down. Since the enactment of the Highway Safety Act in 1966, the number of fatalities has decreased 18 percent from 50,894 in 1966 to 41,611 in 1999. In addition, the fatality rate has been reduced more than 70 percent from 5.5 to 1.5 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel. If this act had not been implemented and the fatality rate remained at the 1966 rate of 5.5 percent, almost 150,000 people would have been killed on our nation's highways in 1999.



*Rumble strips installed at the edge of the pavement give a driver an audible warning if the car runs off the road.*

And the emphasis on safety at FHWA has made a difference. Those timber and stone highway barriers that blend in with the beauty of our national parks save lives. They've done this on the heavily-traveled Baltimore-Washington Parkway, the George Washington Memorial Parkway in the Washington, D.C., area and the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia and North Carolina.

More than one third of fatal highway vehicle crashes result from cars running off the edge of the highway. FHWA has taken three approaches to reducing these crashes. First and foremost, the goal is to keep the driver on the road. Second, if the car does start to leave the road, rumble strips can give the driver an audible warning. Finally, if the car does leave the road, FHWA recommends providing a clear roadside to minimize injuries and damage.

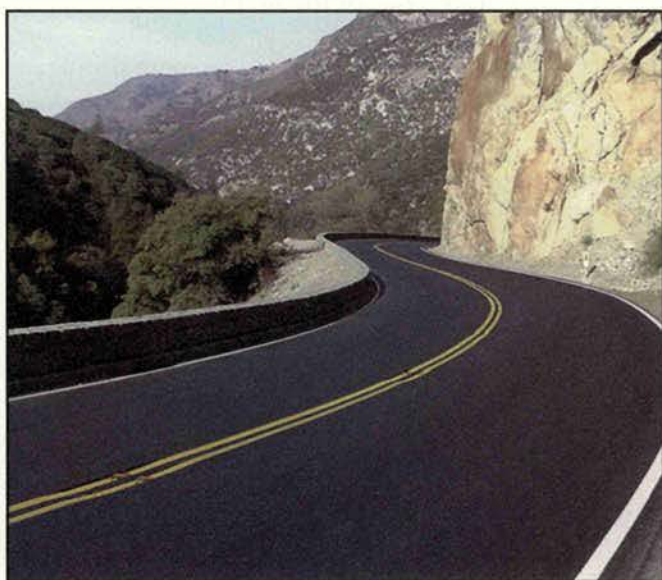


*Attractive stone barriers prevent head-on collisions yet blend in with their surroundings.*





The reconstruction of the El Portal Road in Yosemite National Park, CA, has also made a difference. By adding wider highway lanes, improving roadside barriers and straightening out some of the more dangerous curves, the road and the park safely accommodates the increased traffic and allows safer passage of buses.



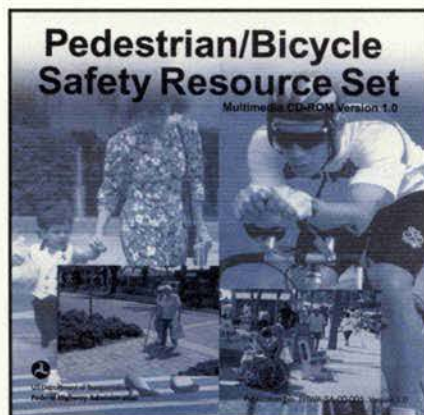
*The reconstructed El Portal Road has been made safer.*

Better road signage can make a difference in saving lives. In 1992, FHWA commissioned a study nationwide that examined the effects of a new, fluorescent yellow-green sign for use particularly at pedestrian and school crossings. The study concluded that the new color was much more visible to motorists, especially under adverse conditions.

As a result, FHWA went on to recommend their use officially in 1998 and the signs have been rapidly implemented across the country.



*The new fluorescent yellow green warning signs are officially recommended for use by FHWA.*



Nearly 5,000 pedestrians and bicyclists died in highway-related crashes in 1999. FHWA is addressing the situation and making a difference by packaging the latest information pedestrian and bicycle safety available in a user-friendly, CD-ROM format. The CD contains information on guidelines, crash types, countermeasures, outreach techniques and tools and much more. This information can help communities and state and local highway departments create a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.

*The information on the new Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety CD-ROM helps reduce injuries and fatalities.*

We've made a difference in reducing fatal crashes where highways cross railroad tracks. By giving funds to states and local governments to eliminate or reduce hazards at highway-rail grade crossings, it's estimated that 10,500 lives have been saved and 51,000 injuries prevented since the program was initiated in 1974. In Lafayette, IN, an ambitious program has successfully eliminated 44 highway/rail crossings in the city. A similar program in Fort Collins, CO, is also eliminating dangerous rail/highway intersections.



*Safety barrier gates, like this system installed in Madison, WI, are designed to halt a pickup truck traveling at 40 mph.*

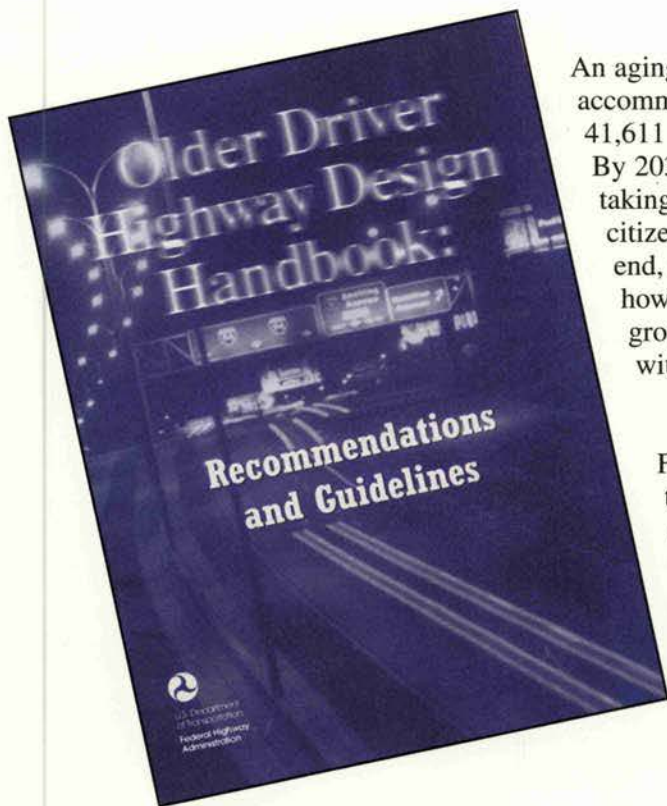


Roadway construction involves establishing work zones where highway workers can work on construction projects without seriously impacting existing traffic patterns. But these zones can be dangerous, as motorists often ignore posted speed limits. In 1999, for example, there were more than 800 deaths and 37,000 injuries resulting from these infractions. FHWA helped make work zones safer for both motorists and highway workers by providing training, outreach materials and improved work zone components, including portable barrier connections, barricades, drums and signaling devices.

FHWA has partnered with several organizations to form the *National Work Zone Awareness Week*, held annually in April, that promotes safety along with mobility in work zones.



*The use of portable flashing warning signs signals motorists that they're approaching a work zone.*



*FHWA has published this Older Driver Highway Design Handbook to help highway designers incorporate features that consider the needs of senior motorists.*

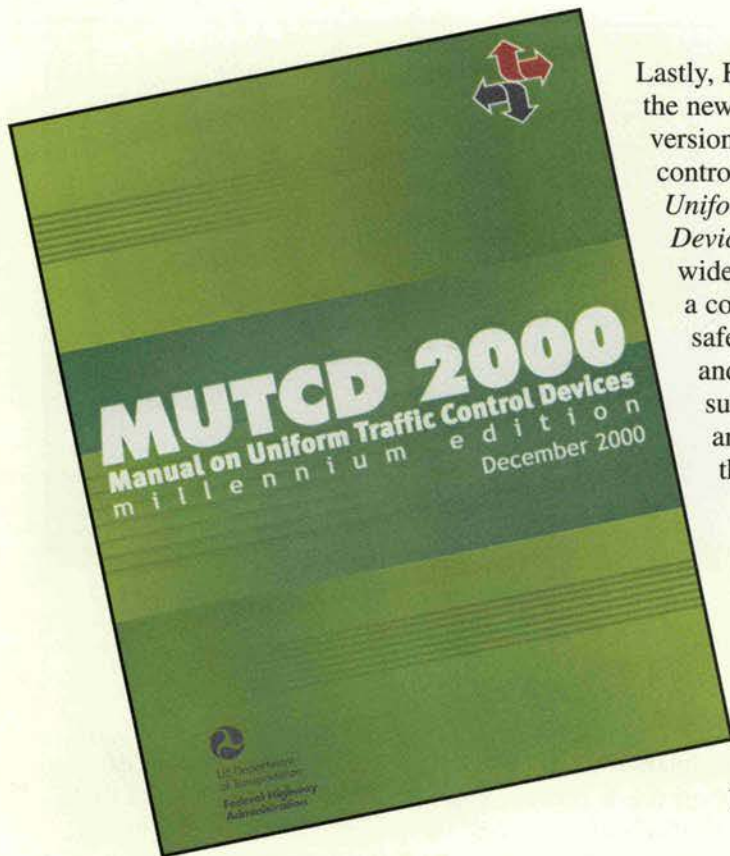
An aging driver population and the special circumstances involved in accommodating their needs is becoming increasingly important. Of those 41,611 killed in traffic fatalities, 7,088 were over 65; nearly 20 percent. By 2030, the over-65 population will climb to 53.7 million. Without taking some specific measures to make roads safer for these senior citizens, we can be sure those fatality numbers will increase. To that end, in 1998, FHWA commissioned a study of the aging driver and how roadway design could be modified to make driving safer for this group. The study found that older drivers have particular difficulty with intersections, merging and interpreting traffic signs and signals.

FHWA is making a difference by recommending certain changes that accommodate the special needs of senior motorists. These changes include improved signage with larger letters and less complex wording, improved lighting at intersections, added or expanded left-turn lanes and longer merge and exit lanes on ramps to interstates.



*And speaking of signs, FHWA addressed the problem of vandalized and defaced signs by producing a video for students that illustrates the dangers of removing or defacing traffic signs.*

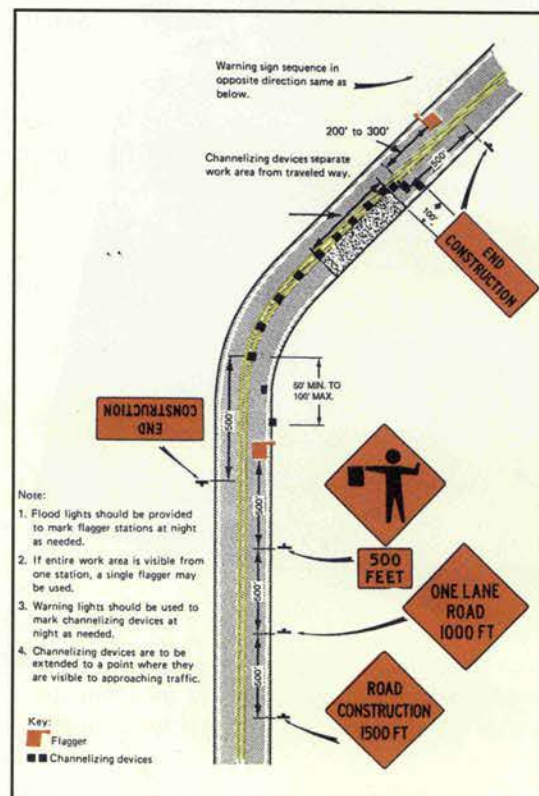




Lastly, FHWA has just published the new updated millennium version of the "Bible" on traffic control devices; the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*. This widely distributed text insures a consistent, uniform and safe approach to designing and implementing systems such as traffic lights, signs and warning devices throughout the country.



Left: The updated millenium edition of the Manual on Uniform Control Devices is now available



The MUTCD provides detailed recommendations on how to properly "sign" an interstate intersection (left) or provide safe directions for a motorist passing through a work zone (right).

**Because FHWA makes safety its number one priority, it continues to work toward making America's highway system one of the safest highway systems in the world.**