

## *Our mission*

*is to identify traffic  
safety problems,  
foster research that  
seeks solutions and  
disseminate  
information and  
educational products*



*Saving lives through research and education*

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# **Your owner's manual**

Getting  
the most  
out of  
*your*  
Foundation



*Saving lives through research and education*

Dear Fellow Road User,

For more than 50 years, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has worked to understand the causes of traffic crashes, make driving safer, and produce better skilled and more responsible drivers. The Foundation has funded over 130 research projects covering all aspects of traffic safety including vehicle, roadway, and human performance factors. We have also evaluated existing as well as new safety solutions to determine what works in the real world. And presently, we have a record number of new projects underway!

As a not-for-profit, publicly supported charitable organization, the AAA Foundation uses this research to develop focused, high impact educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and road users. These include safety videos, brochures, public service announcements, and interactive CD-ROM/ DVD products.

Each year, thanks to support from AAA, CAA, their members, insurance companies, and other generous donors, we are able to fund these research and education projects in order to reach many audiences, from traffic safety experts, to policy makers, engineers, the media, and all “road users” including children.

We hope this “Owner’s Manual” will help you to get to know us better by explaining how we conduct our research and educational outreach. We want you to know how our programs operate, how you benefit, and how you can support our mission.

If you have additional questions, please visit [www.aaafoundation.org](http://www.aaafoundation.org) or call us at 1-800-993-7222.

Sincerely,  
J. Peter Kissinger  
President & CEO



## *Owner's Manual*

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Often when people think of charitable foundations, they imagine massive, impersonal organizations with a lot of bureaucracy insulating the staff from “the real world.” That is not who we are and we are proud of it.

We recognize that the more we know about what actually happens on the road, the more we can direct our research and educational programs to affect real-world change. And the more people know about what we offer, the more they can learn about driving more safely.

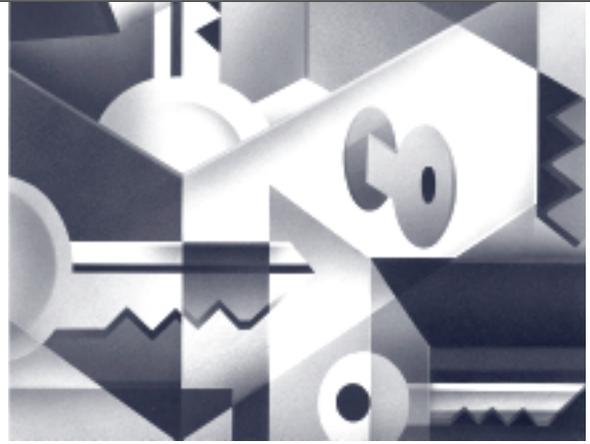
That’s why we created this “Owner’s Manual.” Like the owner’s manual you might find with your new car, this booklet explains how the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety works. You will learn how we choose research topics, how information is distributed, and how our work benefits the public.

We hope that after you read this, you will have a better understanding of what the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is all about, and more importantly, how we work to make the roads safer for everyone.

STEP  
**1**

## Getting started

### *The Foundation's Mission*



**T**he AAA Foundation's mission is clear: "To identify traffic safety problems, foster research that seeks solutions, and disseminate information and educational products."

There are around 190 million licensed drivers in the U.S. today; 40 million more people are driving today than there were living in the U.S. when the AAA Foundation was created in 1947.

Tragically, each year over 40,000 men, women, and children are killed in the U.S. as a result of traffic crashes. Unfortunately, this national public health crisis is all too often viewed by society as "accidents" that will continue to happen. However, we view these as preventable "crashes" and strive for a future where not one driver is killed. Our aim is to enhance traffic safety for all road users, including motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Of course, our mission would be a lot easier if drivers understood the risks on the road, were highly skilled, and practiced good, responsible judgment. This is why the AAA Foundation places special emphasis on educating the public on the true risks involved in driving since we know that in order to influence people's behavior, we must first convince them that a problem exists.

Cars today are safer than they have ever

been. Many are equipped with technologies, such as anti-lock braking systems that improve handling or air bags that make them more "crashworthy" in the event of a collision. At the same time, in-car technologies, such as route mapping, entertainment systems, cell phones, and other personal communication devices, present new risks.

Similarly, despite improvements in our roads and highways, today's traffic volumes and mix of vehicles make driving as challenging and complex as ever. For example, trucks continue to get bigger and truck traffic is growing at a phenomenal rate.

In addition, we realize there are no easy, "one-size-fits-all" solutions, so our research must be focused and our outreach tailored for specific populations. Fortunately, our small size and operating policies allow us to be very responsive and flexible to changing circumstances.

In summary, we strive to reduce injuries and save lives through research and education. We educate the appropriate populations by identifying safety issues, conducting groundbreaking research, and identifying solutions to address the causes and effects.

And most importantly, we are motivated by our vision that one day a zero fatality future will become a reality!

## STEP 2 Operating instructions

*Research*



**T**he AAA Foundation's core mission is conducting research on all aspects of traffic safety. We seek to understand the causes of crashes and how to minimize the consequences of those that occur. We also evaluate safety programs, technologies, policies, and practices to learn how to maximize safety payoffs. And, in all cases, we strive not just to publish new findings, but to offer specific recommendations that can lead to real-world safety improvements. Our process works like this:

- 1.** Each year we issue a public solicitation seeking suggestions for research that should be initiated. Many of these are submitted as proposals by universities and other not-for-profit research organizations seeking funding for research projects. Other ideas are submitted by AAA or CAA clubs, as well as other organizations interested in traffic safety, that identify high priority problems or needs from their unique perspective.
- 2.** The Foundation staff then analyzes the proposals and ideas and whittles down the list to those with the highest priority. As part of our analysis, we make sure that we won't duplicate research already being done elsewhere, and that the research methodology proposed will produce scientifically valid findings.

**3.** Then, the Foundation's Research and Development Advisory Committee meets to consider the proposals, eventually ranking them in the order of the highest potential to improve traffic safety. Special emphasis is placed on answering one simple question: "If approved and initiated, will this project lead to real world safety improvements?"

**4.** Based on the availability of funds, the Foundation initiates the research projects starting from the top of the list. Usually, grants are awarded to universities or other research organizations to actually conduct the research. Sometimes, the Foundation staff conducts the studies internally.

**5.** As the research is completed, all findings are double-checked through a comprehensive peer-review process to ensure scientific credibility. Every effort is made to go beyond "findings" to develop and issue specific recommendations for safer behavior, increased enforcement, better road designs and operations, vehicle improvements or regulatory/legislative actions.

**6.** When the research findings and recommendations are ready for release, we prepare key message points, a media release, supplemental materials, and often hold press conferences to maximize exposure.

## STEP **3** | **Operating instructions**

### *Education and Outreach*



**R**esearch is only useful when people can act on the findings, so we place great emphasis on public education and outreach. Along with our own efforts, we coordinate with AAA and other national organizations to get the word out throughout North America. At the same time we work with AAA and CAA clubs to alert local media and target audiences including legislators, local experts, politicians, and other key stakeholders.

Obviously, our education and outreach is very dependent on the research findings being released, and must be tailored to specific target populations to be effective. In general, we adhere to the following tenets:

- 1.** As new research findings become available, we devise strategies to release them to the public in an easy-to-understand, compelling way, such as scheduling releases around peak travel seasons or conducting press conferences with other organizations.
- 2.** Whenever possible, we incorporate the results of new research into educational products, such as brochures, videos, bookmarks, public service announcements, and CD-ROM/DVD products.

**3.** Special emphasis is placed on making our reports and other materials available to the public on our websites.

**4.** We also work with schools, businesses, and other safety organizations by collaborating on safety projects, providing safety materials, and speaking before numerous national conferences and meetings.

**5.** Sometimes, educational tools become news themselves. For example, our award winning multimedia risk management-based instructional program **driver-ZED®** garnered press attention for its innovation and ability to significantly improve drivers' scanning and decision-making skills. One reporter from *The New York Times* spent an afternoon at our offices "test driving" the program and featured it in the *Times'* computer section.

**6.** Finally, we respond to a constant flow of media inquiries—providing information and expert interviews. In the past year, Foundation representatives have appeared on every major network and have been quoted in every major U.S. newspaper. At any time, Lexis-Nexis, the media tracking service, reports more than 1,000 news stories in its database featuring the Foundation's expert sources.

# STEP 4

## Special accessories



### *Websites*

[www.aaafoundation.org](http://www.aaafoundation.org)

The AAA Foundation website is a state-of-the-art resource for the public, students, researchers, and media reporters looking for reliable, accurate information about traffic safety. Visitors to the site can find a variety of valuable information, including the complete text of research reports, current and archived press releases, traffic safety news, practical safety tips, and engaging quizzes for all road users. Web surfers can browse the Foundation's catalog of traffic safety materials, view traffic safety videos, and order materials online. In addition, research organizations can keep abreast of research projects the Foundation is initiating.

[www.seniordrivers.org](http://www.seniordrivers.org)

This site is a comprehensive resource on all aspects of senior safety and mobility. Senior drivers can find fitness tips to help maintain strength and flexibility, behind-the-wheel safety skills, and long distance travel advice. Information is available to help family members ensure that their senior relatives continue to drive safely. The site also provides guidance

for senior transportation providers and those who want to start such programs.

[www.driverzed.org](http://www.driverzed.org)

This site introduces teen drivers and their parents to our award-winning CD-ROM driver risk management program, **driver-ZED®**. On-line driving quizzes as well as information about the unique safety challenges that confront young drivers are also available. In addition, supplemental training materials for teachers and parents are provided to maximize the safety utility of **driver-ZED®**.

### *Collaboration*

We work with our colleagues in many other transportation and safety organizations. For example, we have contributed financial support to LifeSavers, an annual convention of traffic safety specialists, and AAA Foundation researchers often present research findings during the convention's breakout sessions. Through these and other efforts, we not only gain insights into new developments in the field, but also create additional opportunities to disseminate our own research and expertise.

# STEP 5

## Technical specifications

*Details about the Foundation*



### **Organization**

The AAA Foundation spends its money wisely; expenses for fundraising and administration account for less than 12 percent of our annual expenditures. The rest goes directly to research and education as our mission statement requires.

- Staff: 6 full-time professionals in Washington, DC
- Annual budget: \$3 million
- Founded: 1947

### **Research statistics**

- Supported over 130 research projects since 1947
- Currently working on a wide variety of research issues, including projects on child passenger safety, impaired driving, graduated driver licensing, teen safety, driver training, senior drivers, vehicle technologies, traffic safety educational materials for Latinos, and road safety

### **Education statistics**

- Provide speakers for national safety meetings
- Annually distribute over 700,000 free brochures

### **Outreach statistics**

- Respond to more than 1,000 media inquiries each year
- Distribute electronic newsletter to traffic safety professionals and media contacts
- Reach more than 200 million people annually through television, radio, newspaper, and magazine
- Register nearly 20 million visits each year on the AAA Foundation websites

## Frequently Asked Questions



**Q** *Who funds the Foundation's work?*

**A** As an IRS-certified, tax-exempt, not-for-profit charitable organization (section 501(c)(3)), it is funded by voluntary, tax deductible contributions from motor clubs associated with AAA, CAA, individual AAA club members, insurance companies, and other individuals or groups, often as a memorial to a family member or friend.

**Q** *Is the AAA Foundation part of the AAA?*

**A** No, the AAA Foundation is an independent, tax-exempt organization that serves all of the public.

**Q** *How does the Foundation decide its research priorities?*

**A** We're always developing research ideas—either originated by the staff, sent in as unsolicited proposals, or developed through contacts with experts in the traffic safety field. Ultimately, our Research and Development Advisory Committee reviews the proposals and votes on which ones will receive funding.

**Q** *How does the Foundation decide what research is published?*

**A** Under its public, not-for-profit charter, the Foundation is required to publicly disseminate all of its research findings. A com-

prehensive peer-review process is utilized to ensure all findings are scientifically valid.

**Q** *Has the AAA Foundation been recognized for its contributions?*

**A** We've won awards from the World Traffic Safety Symposium, the Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine, Public Relations Society of America, and others. For **driver-ZED®** we received an award from the Council on International Non-theatrical Events.

**Q** *How does the media depend on the Foundation for information?*

**A** The Foundation is seen as an authoritative voice on traffic safety. Print and electronic media use the Foundation as an expert resource on traffic safety issues, inviting staff to appear on television and radio as well as quoting us extensively in traffic stories. We encourage this by granting unlimited access to staff members and by providing a balanced, accurate perspective on issues. Lawmakers, policy makers, and educators rely on our research for informed guidance, both in the U.S. and abroad.

**Q** *How can I contribute to the Foundation?*

**A** Charitable contributions can be made online at the Foundation's website or by contacting the Foundation. All contributions are fully tax-deductible.