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ROUNDABOUTS, ANOTHER TIME AROUND

Recently I attended Wisconsin's 39th Annual Governor's Conference on Highway Safety and share some information obtained after attending the workshop on roundabouts:

The first roundabout was installed in the city of Howard, near Green Bay in 1999. To date 193 have been installed on state highways and 75 on non-state roadways. Brown County currently has 47 with more in the future. Dodge County currently has two single lane roundabouts located just north of Watertown that were installed as part of the state highway 26 bypass.

Engineers stated that roundabouts are safer because they eliminate the most dangerous element of the traditional intersection, the left turn. Traditional intersections breed T-bone and head-on crashes that can be fatal. With roundabouts, head-on and high-speed right angle collisions are virtually eliminated.

At a traditional 4-way intersection there are 32 potential vehicle conflict points where collisions can occur compared to 8 on the roundabout.

Most collisions in roundabouts are minor and occur when the a driver entering the roundabout assumes that the driver coming on their left is continuing travel left around the circle, when in fact was exiting the roundabout.

Crash statistics show that roundabouts reduce fatal crashes about 90% and reduce injury crashes about 35% when compared to any other type of intersection.

Sometime back I wrote that I have had senior friends and relatives tell me that they have never driven on a roundabout and that they drive out of their way to avoid them. They state that they are confusing and that they aren't sure what to do. I think some of the confusion comes from having traveled a stretch of familiar highway many times in the last 20-50 years prior to the roundabouts and now things have changed and don't look and anything like they used to. Streets and highways that went straight ahead now require one or two roundabouts with several streets or roads merging in a big circle.
Avoiding them is fine but there may come a time when you may have to use a roundabout. As a fellow senior I offer a few things that might lessen some confusion and apprehension.

- Slow down, speed under 15 MPH.
- Pay attention to the large sign prior to the roundabout, it will show your exit.
- Enter the roundabout yielding to traffic on your left already in the roundabout.
- Enter the roundabout when there is a safe gap in traffic.
- Travel counterclockwise.
- When your exit comes up, signal a right turn and exit.
- If you miss your exit, go around (counterclockwise) and try it again.
- If you miss it again, try it again, you'll get it.
- The first time some apprehension will be normal, it's new and you never used them before.