Vehicle Adaptations

Categories : Disability Related Services, Independent Living Services, Older Adult Programs, Transportation

Some of the information below is excerpted from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's website: https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/adapted-vehicles*.*

Description: People with disabilities may need to buy, adapt or modify motor vehicles to accommodate their disability. There are three companies in Connecticut that specialize in adapting, modifying or selling these vehicles. They are Advanced Wheels (www.advancedwheels.com/), Mobility Works (formerly known as Ride-Away), https://www.mobilityworks.com/locations/wheelchair-vans-for-sale-in-east-hartford-connecticut/ in East Hartford, and Wheelchair Getaways (www.wheelchairgetawaysct.com/) in Bethel. Types of adaptations added to vehicles include hand controls; lowered floors or raised roofs; power doors, locks, steering or windows; and wheelchair lifts or ramps.

What to Consider When Buying or Modifying a Vehicle: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA): (https://www.nhtsa.gov/) recommends that consumers who are considering buying or modifying a vehicle take the following steps:

> Evaluate Your Needs –Driver Rehabilitation Specialists at the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services can perform an evaluation for needed driving requirements and recommended vehicle modifications;
> Select the Right Vehicle – The consumer needs to make sure that they are buying the right vehicle or are able to adapt a vehicle they already own by consulting with the evaluator and the vehicle dealer on whether or not the vehicle can accommodate wheelchairs, walkers or other adaptive equipment and also have room for family members or other passengers;
> Choose a Qualified Dealer – Ask questions about credentials, training and experience and whether or not the dealer provides maintenance and service;
> Obtain Training on the Use of New Equipment – Equipment dealers and evaluators should provide information and off-road instruction on using new adaptive equipment or driving a new adapted vehicle; and
> Maintain Your Vehicle – Keep up regular maintenance on the vehicle and have adaptive equipment inspected by the time periods specified on the warranties.

Connecticut Tech Act Project: The NHTSA estimates that purchasing a new vehicle modified with adaptive equipment can cost $20,000 to $80,000, so it may be necessary to look for financial assistance. The State of Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), through the Connecticut Tech Act Project (https://cttechact.com/) offers an Assistive Technology Loan Program which provides low interest loans to people with disabilities to purchase equipment or to make home or vehicle modifications to maintain or improve functional capabilities. DORS can also help find a qualified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist to perform adapted vehicle evaluations.

SOURCES: Agency listings in 2-1-1 database; "Adapting Motor Vehicles for People with Disabilities" – a brochure posted on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's website; Advanced Wheels, Mobility Works (formerly known as Ride-Away); Wheelchair Getaways
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