

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

We live in an increasingly automated world. Our roadways are no exception. Vehicles are getting larger and faster, and distractions such as cell phones and portable music players are creating an environment that can be risky for the pedestrians that share our roadways. Both pedestrians and drivers can do many things to increase their safety, and the safety of others while sharing the road.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS:

Minnesota Statute 169.21 defines the rights and responsibilities of drivers and pedestrians:

- *Where traffic-control signals are not in place or in operation, the driver of a vehicle shall stop to yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a marked crosswalk or at an intersection with no marked crosswalk.*
- *The driver must remain stopped until the pedestrian has passed the lane in which the vehicle is stopped.*
- *No pedestrian shall suddenly leave a curb or other place of safety and walk or run into the path of a vehicle which is so close that it is impossible for the driver to yield.*
- A crosswalk does not include the area behind the curb. (169.01). A pedestrian does not have right-of-way until he or she enters the crosswalk.

WON'T A MARKED CROSSWALK BE SAFER?

Unfortunately, under many conditions, the answer is clearly no. A 2005 study of hundreds of crossing locations by the Federal Highway Administration found that the pedestrian crash rate (crashes per million pedestrians) was often *over four times higher* at marked crosswalks than at unmarked crosswalks under similar traffic conditions. In no category was a marked crosswalk found to have a significantly lower crash rate than an unmarked crosswalk.

This study can be found in its entirety at <http://www.tfhr.gov/safety/pubs/04100/04100.pdf>

AT TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Many pedestrians don't know that the law requires them to obey traffic signal indications. Furthermore, many pedestrians do not know how to properly navigate a signalized intersection. A few things to keep in mind are:

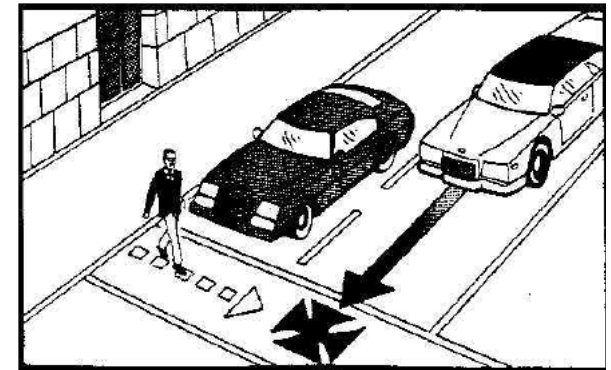
- Always press the pedestrian push button if there is one present. Most signals in Washington County are optimized for vehicle traffic. Pressing the pedestrian button will not change the signal immediately, but it will give you more time to cross when it is your turn.
- Do not saunter through an intersection. You should move at a brisk but controlled pace. In Washington County, traffic signals are programmed to serve pedestrians moving at approximately four feet per second.
- It is important to know what each pedestrian indication means. The steady white WALK or walking person symbol means that you may begin crossing. The flashing orange DON'T WALK or hand symbol means that you have enough time to finish crossing if you started before it began flashing, but do not start crossing. And, the steady orange DON'T WALK or hand symbol means that pedestrians should not be in the crosswalk.

FOR PEDESTRIANS

- Make sure others can see you. Wear fluorescent or brightly colored clothing and if you are out when it's dark, carry a flashlight and wear reflective clothing to be visible.
- Use sidewalks when provided. It is unlawful to walk or operate a wheelchair along a roadway if there is a sidewalk present.
- When walking or using a wheelchair, do so on the left side of the roadway (against the flow of traffic). It is much easier for vehicles to see you, and for you to see oncoming vehicles.
- Do not enter the crosswalk until there is a gap in traffic large enough for drivers to safely yield. Drivers are not required to stop for a pedestrian waiting behind a curb, and pedestrians are not allowed to enter the roadway until it is safe for drivers to stop.

FOR DRIVERS

- Minnesota law requires you to stop for pedestrians in ANY crosswalk, marked or unmarked, where there are no traffic controls present.
- Obey all posted speed limits
- Give children, the elderly, and the disabled plenty of time to cross as they may move slowly.
- Use extra caution around school bus loading zones and school areas, as children may dart out from between parked vehicles
- Look for pedestrians at all intersections, especially when turning.
- Never pass a stopped vehicle at a crosswalk.

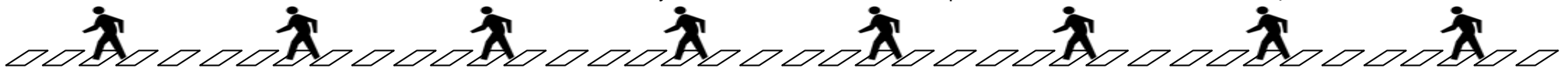


Never pass a stopped vehicle at a crosswalk. Source: FHWA

FOR PARENTS

Children are at a greater risk as pedestrians partly due to their often impulsive and unpredictable behavior in traffic situations. It is extremely important that parents not only teach their children about traffic safety and the proper ways to cross a street, but also to set an example for their children by following the rules themselves.

- Teach your children the proper way to cross a street.
- Do not let children play in any street. Find alternate places for them to play.
- Dress your children appropriately. Use reflective material and do not allow hoods or umbrellas to impede the child's vision.



FOR SCHOOL SAFETY PATROLS

School crossing guards are among the most effective pedestrian safety strategies available. Many schools rely on School Safety Patrols to assist their students in safely crossing the streets and highways in Washington County. These patrols are comprised of a student volunteer or sometimes an adult crossing guard. Remember: *It is against the law for any person to drive a motor vehicle through a column of school children crossing a street or highway, or past a member of a school safety patrol or adult crossing guard, while the member of the patrol is directing children to cross.*

TRAIL CROSSINGS

Recreational trails, such as the Gateway Trail, often have their own traffic controls, including stop signs where the trail crosses a roadway. A trail crossing is *not* considered a crosswalk under state law, and all trail users must yield to all roadway traffic before crossing. The same rule applies when crossing a roadway anywhere other than an intersection or marked crosswalk.

FOR EVERYONE

Pedestrian injuries can be prevented. When pedestrians and vehicles collide, regardless of fault, the pedestrian always loses. Remember to be a defensive pedestrian. We all have rights and responsibilities provided for in the traffic laws of this state. Everyone should learn about and respect these rights and responsibilities. Safety starts with each one of us.

If you have questions, requests, or suggestions concerning traffic in Washington County, contact the Transportation Division at (651)-430-4300
Or visit our Web Page at www.co.washington.mn.us

Acknowledgements:
Minnesota Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration



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