

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The safety of pedestrians walking along or across streets and highways is one of the most important aspects of roadway safety, but also often one of the most poorly understood. The increasing number of pedestrians and vehicles, and the increasing number of distractions for both, only heightens the importance of understanding the risks and responsibilities at locations where pedestrians and vehicles share the same spaces.

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. (Subd. 2a)*
- *The driver must remain stopped until the pedestrian has passed the lane in which the vehicle is stopped. (Subd. 2a)*
- *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. (Subd. 2a)*
- A crosswalk does not include the area behind the curb. A pedestrian does not have right-of-way until he or she enters the crosswalk. (Statute 169.011, Subd. 20 & 68)

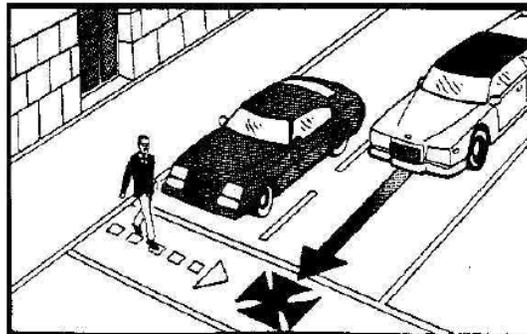
WON'T A MARKED CROSSWALK BE SAFER?

Crosswalk signs and markings have only been shown to make safety much worse. 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 <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/04100/>

FOR CROSSWALK USERS

- Always check EACH and every lane of traffic as you cross a roadway. Even if a driver in one lane stops for you, drivers or bicyclists in other lanes might not be able to see you around the stopped vehicle in time to stop for you.
- Do not enter a crosswalk until there is a gap in traffic large enough for drivers to safely stop for you. Drivers are not required to stop for a pedestrian who is not within the roadway, and pedestrians are not allowed to enter the roadway until it is safe for drivers to stop.
- Be visible at night. It has been shown that pedestrians greatly overestimate the distance at which drivers are able to see them at night. If you are out when it's dark, carry a flashlight or wear reflective clothing to be visible to drivers. Never assume that drivers are able to see you, regardless of what you are wearing.
- Watch for turning vehicles. Even at stop signs or red lights where a driver has already stopped at the crosswalk, they may be looking in only one direction for a gap in traffic and they may not readily see you if you are approaching the crosswalk from the opposite direction.
- Beware of distractions. Phones, music players, and games can divert your attention from the potential hazards around you.
- Use sidewalks when provided. It is unlawful to walk (or operate a wheelchair) within a roadway if there is a sidewalk present. If you must walk along a roadway, do so on the left edge of the roadway, walking against the flow of traffic.



It can be difficult for drivers and pedestrians to see each other at multi-lane crossing locations. Source: FHWA

FOR DRIVERS

- Minnesota law requires you to stop for pedestrians who are crossing the roadway at ANY intersection or within any marked or unmarked crosswalk where there are no traffic controls present, until the pedestrian has passed your lane of traffic. (169.011 and 169.21)
- Avoid stopping for pedestrians who are not within the roadway, such as standing behind a curb or within a median. While it may seem courteous, doing so is not required by law and it can put crosswalk users in serious danger. Many crosswalk users have been killed after a driver stopped for them, only to be struck in an adjacent lane by a driver who did not see them around the larger stopped vehicle.
- Stop further back. When stopping for a pedestrian who is within the roadway, stop two car lengths back from the edge of the crosswalk. This will make it much easier for the pedestrian and other drivers to see each other.
- Use extreme caution when passing any stopped or parked vehicle. Most crosswalk locations are at intersections, and vehicles stop at intersections for many reasons. Be sure that they are not stopped for a pedestrian who may not be checking for traffic in your lane.
- Look both ways before turning. One of the most common pedestrian crash types in Washington County is when a driver is making a turn after stopping at a stop sign or red light. Looking to their left for a gap, they do not see the crosswalk user approaching from their right.

FOR PARENTS

Children are at a greater risk as pedestrians partly due to their shorter height and lack of experience. It is important that parents not only teach their children about traffic safety and the proper ways to cross a street, but also to set a good example by following the rules themselves.

- 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.



AT TRAFFIC SIGNALS

- Pedestrians are required to obey traffic signals.
- Always press the pedestrian push button if there is one present. Pressing the pedestrian button will not change the signal immediately, but it will allow you to cross legally and will provide more time for you to cross.
- It is important to understand what each pedestrian signal 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 may continue crossing if you started before it began flashing, but do not start crossing.
 - The steady orange DON'T WALK or hand symbol means that pedestrians should not be in the crosswalk.
 - For drivers, always stop on red prior to the crosswalk, even when turning right on red.

BICYCLES AT CROSSWALKS

Cyclists are allowed to use crosswalks, subject to the same rights and responsibilities as pedestrians. Cyclists are not legally required to dismount, but riding within a crosswalk can make it much harder to be seen by, and react to, traffic in subsequent lanes, including to other cyclists, who may be riding along the roadway shoulders.

FOR TRAIL USERS

Recreational trails, such as the Gateway Trail, often have their own traffic controls where the trail crosses a roadway, requiring trail users to stop before crossing the roadway. Trail Crossings are not considered to be crosswalks (except where marked on the pavement), and trail users must select a gap large enough to cross the entire roadway without causing drivers to brake.

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

Washington
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