

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

Pedestrian Safety By Mark Nease

The summertime is a great time to enjoy the weather and receive your exercise. Whether a quick walk throughout your neighborhood, in your city or far away while on vacation, your safety awareness is important. Likewise, driver awareness of pedestrians is equally important.

Pedestrian safety should not be taken lightly. Accidents involving pedestrians being struck-by vehicles are continually occurring. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) keeps statistics on traffic/pedestrian accidents. During the period of 2002 to 2011, there was an average of 4,594 pedestrians killed each year in the United States in a traffic/pedestrian-related accident. Seventy (70%) percent of pedestrian fatalities in 2011 occurred at night and 88% of pedestrian fatalities in 2011 occurred on clear days. What could be the causes of these types of accidents?

Pedestrian/traffic accidents are chiefly caused by persons not having their mind on the task. Drivers are consumed with distractions, which contributes to their being unable to see pedestrians, sometimes until it's too late. Pedestrians also become either distracted or decide to walk where they are not permitted.

Pedestrian Precautions

Let's face it, everybody is a pedestrian. Following practical tips on pedestrian safety can help keep us all out of danger:

- Choose to walk on the sidewalk.
- When you have no other choice but to walk on the road, choose to walk facing traffic. That is, walk along the shoulder on the left side of the road, as far away from traffic as possible. Be sure to be cognitive of your surroundings at all times. Being cognitive means avoiding being distracted, which can be amplified through the use of electronic devices.
- Practice good "crossing the street" etiquette. That is, use crosswalks, not jaywalks!
- The Uniform Vehicle Code typically requires drivers to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks where there is no traffic light; however, pedestrians are required to yield to drivers in three (3) circumstances:
 1. When the pedestrian is not using a designated crosswalk.
 2. When the pedestrian is crossing a roadway and there is a pedestrian tunnel or overhead crossing available nearby.
 3. When the pedestrian is walking along the side of a roadway.
- Remember, you are safer when you are seen by drivers. Make yourself visible in the daytime and at night.
- Practice making eye contact with drivers, especially when walking on the shoulder or when crossing the street.
- Make good choices on your clothing attire when you plan to walk when it's dark. Choose bright colored clothing and consider the use of reflective clothing.

- Don't rule out the use of a flashlight when walking in the dark.
- Be on high alert when walking on a sidewalk that also serves as a cross-way vehicle entrance to a parking lot. Drivers tend to be in a hurry and not looking for pedestrians when entering and exiting these lots.
- Remember, when crossing the street, look left, then right, then left before crossing.
- Be present in the present. That is, have your mind on your task of being a pedestrian when you are a pedestrian.

For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or sorr@cmregent.com.

Driver Precautions

When you are driving:

- Always be on the lookout for pedestrians. Pedestrians sometimes walk where they are not allowed.
- Drive the speed limit so that if needed, you can get your vehicle slowed down in time to avoid hitting a pedestrian.
- When in a school zone, be sure to drive the 15 mph speed limit. If you have difficulty doing this, the police are willing to help you out (by writing you a moving violation fine).
- Practice good "driving upon crosswalks" etiquette. It's a state law for drivers to yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk where there is no traffic light. Be sure to stop at crosswalks to allow pedestrians to cross safely. And of course, be respectful. Don't rev your engine if the pedestrian is crossing too slowly.
- Never attempt to pass vehicles that are stopped at a crosswalk.
- Drive cautiously where signage warns of the possibility of children at play.
- Be on the lookout for pedestrians when backing up, especially in parking lots. Pedestrians can suddenly cross into your path.

Everybody is a pedestrian. Following safety awareness tips are a viable way of reducing the risk of traffic/pedestrian accidents.