

## Pedestrian Safety, Public Sanity!



Last week I talked about bicycle safety and the “rules of the road”. Today I would like to touch on pedestrians and the rules that apply to them. ***If you are a parent or school employee***, you may want to go over some of the rules and tips below with your students. Maybe play a game to see how many rules they are aware of. It could be enlightening.

Three years ago, a high school student once told me that pedestrians ***always*** have the right of way, especially if they are in the crosswalk – no matter what. In addition, if a car were to hit her, her family would sue because it would be the driver’s fault. *Really?* Dumbfounded, I could not believe that this is what our youth actually think – especially at her age. I do not know if this is what her parents have taught her, or if it is a misconception on her part. What I do know is that pedestrian safety and rules should be reviewed with children no matter the age. The earlier the better.

The conversation with this particular teen came about because I knew who the girl was and earlier that afternoon she had crossed the street in front of me on her way back to school from lunch. Just before she forcefully walked out into the crosswalk without looking and demanded her turn, the left turn arrow had just turned green for me and I had already started to proceed. I had to stop in the middle to wait for her to cross ever so slowly while I held up traffic waiting for her and her friends. All the while, traffic was backing up in the intersection creating a hazard.

So I ask you, did she, as a pedestrian, have the right-of-way? If you answered no, then you would be correct. She could have been cited for the infraction had an officer of the law witnessed the event. **State law indicates that drivers must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians crossing the street in a marked or unmarked crosswalk at intersections or designated mid-block crossings (that are marked). However, a pedestrian must also take due care for his or her own safety. Pedestrians cannot suddenly enter the street and walk or run in the path of a moving vehicle, especially when entering the street will cause an immediate hazard. Also, while in the crosswalk, pedestrians cannot unnecessarily stop or delay traffic.**



When my kids were little, I would demonstrate the rules and reinforce them as we crossed together – whether by bike, car, or on foot - eventually having them tell me what the rules are as we went along. **Everyday life/circumstances are a great way for teaching and reinforcing the simple, but very important, everyday rules of life.** By the time they become teens, it should be second nature and they will do it automatically without giving it a second thought.

Below are some rules that pedestrians should follow; not only for *their* safety, but also for the safety of those drivers nearby.

### **Crossing the Street at Unsignalized Locations:**

When crossing the street, you should only cross at corners or at mid-block crosswalks that are marked by painted lines in the street. However, before entering, you should:

1. Stop at the curb (or edge of the road).
2. Look left.
3. Look right.
4. Look left again.
5. If you see any vehicles, wait until the drivers go by or the drivers have made eye contact with you, stopped and have motioned for you to cross first.
6. Look left, right again, and step into the street when you have determined that all drivers are aware of your intentions and it is safe; and walk across the street (continuing to look left and right until you have made it to the other side.) If you are trying to cross where a vehicle is parked, make sure that there is no driver in the vehicle and then follow Steps 1-6, listed above.

### **Crossing the Street at Signalized Locations:**

Here are a few safety reminders for when you cross at signalized crosswalks:

1. Press the pedestrian indication button when one is available.
2. Only walk when the pedestrian light for your direction of traffic says **WALK** (or a walking pedestrian symbol is displayed). The symbol indicates that you can begin crossing but it is important that you check traffic to make sure all drivers at the intersection see you (especially drivers making a right turn from the corner – who may also have a green light).
3. A flashing **DON'T WALK** (or an upraised hand symbol) means it is too late to safely start crossing the street **but you should finish crossing the street if you are already in the intersection.** (If a median island is available with a pedestrian push button, stop in the median and wait for the next signal.) If you reach the flashing DON'T WALK or upraised hand symbol before crossing the street, push the pedestrian button (if one is available) and wait for the next cycle of pedestrian signals.



**Note: If the lights for vehicular traffic are green and the pedestrian signal says DON'T WALK, do not start walking across the street.**



### Flashing LED Crosswalks:



Did you know that our big town of Hanford has a flashing LED crosswalk? Neither did I until I happened upon it one night. It is located in front of Hanford High School on Grangeville Boulevard. If you don't know it's there, and you are driving at night, look out! Those lights are bright, and will throw you for a loop the first time they flash at you. This flashing sidewalk is *not* at an intersection, but rather in the middle of the block where a regular crosswalk once was. Although the lights are very bright and give warning to drivers that pedestrians would like to cross the street, pedestrians should still follow the safety tips for crossing the street. Be careful, because even though the lights are flashing and bright all the way across the street, it is hard to see someone crossing at night. You see the lights, but not always the pedestrian. As a pedestrian, don't assume that vehicles will stop, or that they can see you. ***Remember, you as a pedestrian are also responsible for your safety.***

## LET'S RECAP

- Always walk on the sidewalk.
- If a sidewalk does not exist, walk on the left-hand edge of the roadway, facing oncoming traffic.
- Cross the street at intersections or at marked mid-block crosswalks.
- Stop at the curb. Look left, look right, look left again.
- Be responsible for your own safety. Do not assume cars will stop for you.
- At signalized locations, walk only when the pedestrian signal indicates walk or shows walking guy.
- Do not start to cross if the pedestrian signal is flashing red or is solid red. However, if you are already in the intersection, finish crossing.
- Take the time to cross safely.
- Be Safe. Be Smart. Be Seen!

Just because you are older and you don't have a crossing guard helping you across the street doesn't mean it's a free for all. Please, for your safety and for the safety of those around you, PLEASE obey the laws! Those who love you will thank you, and the drivers around you can have some sanity in their day.



**Note:** This article was written but not posted before the article from the Hanford Sentinel on Tuesday, September 21, 2010. If you would like to read more on Hanford's new sidewalks, you may go to:

[http://www.hanfordsentinel.com/news/local/article\\_a74b0754-c59c-11df-aba9-001cc4c002e0.html](http://www.hanfordsentinel.com/news/local/article_a74b0754-c59c-11df-aba9-001cc4c002e0.html)

**Graphic Resources:**

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