

“Pedestrian Street Crossing Issues” Information from Douglas County Traffic Engineering

With the start of a new school year it is important for parents and drivers to be aware of children walking to and from school. Crossing a street is a simple task for most adults; we have learned over the years and through experience how to cross a street safely. However even adults don't always understand or obey all the rules. It's up to us as adults to understand and know these rules and to teach our children all the rules and safety tips so that they can safely cross a street. It is also up to all in the community to learn how to be a responsible driver and to be aware of pedestrians.

Below are some basic traffic and pedestrian rules and safety tips for crossing a street.

Colorado state laws establish the rights and responsibilities for both pedestrians and drivers within all of Colorado. CRS #42-4-802 establishes the following:

Pedestrian's responsibility rules: “Every pedestrian crossing a roadway at any point other than within a marked crosswalk or within an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection shall yield the right-of-way to all vehicles upon the roadway.” and “No pedestrian shall suddenly leave a curb or other place of safety and ride a bicycle, walk, or run into the path of a moving vehicle which is so close as to constitute an immediate hazard”.

Pedestrian safety tips:

- Plan a walking route to your destination. Choose a route with the fewest street crossings and, if possible, cross at signalized or stop controlled intersections.
- When teaching children, make sure they understand and obey all traffic signs, traffic signals and traffic controls.
- If a sidewalk is not available, always walk as far from the traffic flow as possible and walk facing on coming traffic.
- When it is necessary to cross the road, it is best to cross at a signalized intersection or at a marked crosswalk.
- Stop at the curb or edge of the roadway before crossing.
- Obey the traffic control where you are crossing. If the crossing is signalized, push the pedestrian push button and follow the pedestrian signal indications. Begin walking when the illuminated walk symbol is lit. When the signal switches to the flashing don't walk symbol, you may continue to cross the street but there is no longer enough time to begin crossing. A solid don't walk symbol means do not enter the street.
- At a stop controlled intersection, make sure that vehicles have come to a complete stop before proceeding across the road. Remember to look in all directions especially for vehicles that may turn into the direction you are crossing. Make eye contact with the driver to make sure they see you.

- If it is necessary to cross at an uncontrolled crosswalk, you must take extra precautions. First, wait for gaps in both directions of traffic. Remember to look in all directions, especially for vehicles that may turn into the direction you are crossing. When you have a gap that will allow you to cross the road safely, you may then step off the curb. Do not step off the curb into oncoming traffic at anytime.
- Beware! Even if one vehicle stops allowing you to cross, other vehicles may not yield or even see you. Once you have safely entered the crosswalk, approaching vehicles should stop. However, even though a vehicle should stop doesn't mean they will, so always be alert.
- Walk directly across the street at a constant pace, do not run. Continue to observe traffic and stay alert.
- Never run or ride bicycles, roller blades, skate board or scooters across the street.
- Pedestrians should not enter the street from between parked cars or from behind bushes or shrubs.
- Treat all street crossings the same, obey the rules and always be alert.
- Laws for all crossings are the same for both driver and pedestrians. This means rules for a marked, unmarked, midblock or crossings with flashers are the same. Flashers or pedestrian activated flashers are placed at crossings with higher volumes of pedestrians to warn drivers of the potential for a pedestrian crossing the street. Pushing the yellow warning flasher button does not make a vehicle stop and pedestrians should always yield to the on-coming traffic and wait for gaps in the traffic before crossing. The yellow warning flasher is there only to draw attention to the crossing, and does not modify the right of way rules.

Drivers responsibility rules: “The driver of a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way, slowing down or stopping if need be to so yield, to a pedestrian crossing the roadway *within a crosswalk*” and “When traffic control signals are not in place or not in operation, the driver of a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way, slowing down or stopping if need be to so yield, to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a crosswalk when the pedestrian is upon the half of the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the opposite half of the roadway as to be in danger.”

Driver safety tips:

- Pay attention to any vehicle stopped at a marked crosswalk or at any unmarked crosswalk at an intersection. This vehicle may be stopped to permit a pedestrian to cross the roadway; the driver of any other vehicle approaching from the rear shall not overtake and pass such stopped vehicle.
- When drivers are making a turn at an intersection they should pay attention to pedestrians who may be crossing. Remember a driver must yield to pedestrians within the crosswalk. At signalized intersections the pedestrian signal allows for pedestrians to walk during the same vehicle through movements.
- Watch for pedestrians who may dart out behind parked cars, bushes or other roadside obstructions.

- Vehicles should never park, stop or block a crosswalk.
- Be extra cautious around school crossing areas. Slow down and watch for children on the way to or from school. Watch for children who may not look before they begin crossing.
- Observe all traffic signage and be sure to slow to the posted school zone speed when within the lowered speed zone. Fines are double.
- When backing out of a parking space or driveway, watch for children walking or biking to school.
- Watch for children near school bus stops. Children are likely to be playing or running and not paying attention to traffic. Be sure to stop when the bus has started the red flashing lights. You must remain stopped until the lights have been turned off.

REMEMBER Crossing a street can become a matter of life or death, so plan, observe and don't take risks. Because our children learn by example, be sure to follow traffic laws and safety tips at all times. Teach your children these rules and then be sure to follow them yourself as a pedestrian and as a driver.