

Reference Library

Safety Tips

Best Pedestrian Practices

“Weather” it’s hot and sunny, or a blizzard is blowin’, the weather can directly impact a pedestrian’s safety. The following tips will help keep you safe.

When it’s hot outside

Motorists who see an ice cream truck, a group of children playing on the sidewalk or in the street, or a ball or toy bounce into the street, should slow down. A child may be hidden by the ice cream truck or may forget to stop and look before running into the street.

If you’re a motorist, keep your windshield clean. Pollen, dirt, and other debris can increase glare and reduce visibility.

Encourage children to play at a playground or recreation facility. This will help to keep them away from motor vehicle traffic.

Remember that “fluorescent” colors like blaze orange, hot pink, and day-glo green are great to wear during the day and at dawn, dusk and other low-light conditions. But at night, lights can do more than any other device to increase one’s odds of being seen. Lights combined with reflectorized or retroreflectorized (materials that reflect light back to its source) vests or other apparel or safety strips are also effective.

When it’s cold outside

If you’re a motorist, keep your windshield clean– salt, dirt, and other debris can increase glare and reduce visibility.

Remember that pedestrian traffic increases significantly after a snow or ice storm. Snow drifts can cover signs and landmarks and block corners, crosswalks, and handicap access ramps. Walkways may not be cleared, forcing pedestrians to walk in the street. The snow and ice can turn familiar territory into an alien landscape for both pedestrians and motorists.

If the sidewalks and walkways are impassable and you have to walk in the street, walk **against** traffic and as close to the curb or edge of the road as you can.

Wearing dark “winter” colors can make it hard for motorists to see you, especially if they aren’t expecting you. Remember that “fluorescent” colors like blaze orange, hot pink, and day-glo green are great to wear during the day and at dawn, dusk, and other low-light conditions. But at night, lights can do more than any other device to increase one’s odds of being seen. Lights combined with reflectorized or retroreflectorized (materials that reflect light back to its source) vests or other apparel or safety strips are also effective.

Snow that has accumulated into drifts can muffle the sounds of approaching motor vehicles. Wearing hats and scarves that cover your ears can also distort or even eliminate these sounds. Keep warm, but make sure you can hear what's going on around you.

If you can, shop before the storm hits! If you have to shop, don't buy more than you can easily carry. Remember that the streets may be slippery and carrying heavy packages can impair your balance.

When traveling with babies or small children, make sure they are dressed in brightly colored or reflective clothing. If you have to push a stroller or walk in the street, the child should be in front of you and as close to the curb or edge of the road as possible.

Because of road conditions, motorists may not be able to stop at traffic signals or slow down for pedestrians who have the right of way. Before you step off the curb or edge of the road into the street, make sure that any approaching vehicles have come to a complete stop.

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