

Take a Walk on the Safe Side

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Safety is important for all roadway users — pedestrians and drivers alike. Both are expected to follow the safe rules of the road to help prevent crippling or deadly accidents.

Each year, about 4,600 pedestrians are killed and another 70,000 are injured in traffic accidents. Following the tips below will help you to walk on the safe side.

1. Be alert and attentive to traffic and don't cross the street until it's safe.
2. Be responsible and obey pedestrian Walk/Don't Walk signals. One-third of all fatal collisions are a result of a pedestrian disregarding traffic signals or making a dangerous judgment.
3. Look left-right-left. If the road is clear, begin crossing. If you're in a country where motorists drive on the left side of the road, then reverse the process and look right-left-right.
4. When crossing the street, continue to check for traffic in all directions, especially for vehicles making a right turn on red.
5. At a crosswalk, if there is traffic, make eye contact with drivers so they can see you, understand your intentions and stop before you start to cross.
6. Use sidewalks when they are available. On roads without sidewalks, it is safest to walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic.
7. Never attempt to walk along or cross expressways, interstate highways or turnpikes. If your vehicle breaks down, remain inside and use your cell phone to call for help.
8. When walking at night or during the low-light hours of dawn or dusk, wear something reflective on your clothing and shoes or carry a flashlight. Almost 50 percent of all pedestrian fatalities occur between 6 p.m. and midnight — a six-hour window. Wearing reflective clothing is especially important during the fall and winter months, when daylight hours are shorter and people often wear dark coats or other clothing which may be difficult for motorists to see.
9. Limit consumption of alcohol if you plan on walking. About 34 percent of all pedestrians killed have a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08 or greater.
10. Supervise road crossings for children under the age of 10 since they don't have the capacity to safely judge the situation. Pedestrian fatalities involving children between the ages of 5 and 9 make up one-fourth of all roadway fatalities for this age group.

Drivers also need to be extra vigilant. Stay alert. Make sure your lights are on and refrain from taking your eyes off the roadway. Be sure to look for pedestrians in areas where they are likely to appear, such as an intersection, but remember walkers can be on any road. It could save a life — or change yours forever.

