

WisDOT: Stay alert, look for pedestrians to save lives on the roads

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Everyone is a pedestrian, whether commuting to the bus stop, entering or exiting a building, or just out for a walk. There are many benefits of walking, but pedestrians can be vulnerable on the roads.

An average of 53 pedestrians are killed and about 1,300 are hurt in crashes every year in Wisconsin. A pedestrian is injured every 10 minutes in crashes across the U.S., according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Wisconsin State Patrol's October Law of the Month focuses on pedestrian safety to reduce needless crashes and prevent injuries and deaths.

"Dusk starts to arrive earlier this time of year, which makes it harder to see pedestrians who are out walking," Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. "Pedestrian Safety Month is an opportunity to re-evaluate how you drive to make sure you're sharing the road safely with all users. Safe drivers can prevent tragedies on the roads."

Wisconsin's pedestrian laws

State laws aim to keep pedestrians safe by creating a protected space to cross streets. Drivers must:

- Yield to pedestrians in a sidewalk, alley, or driveway
- Yield to pedestrians who have started crossing at an intersection or crosswalk on a walk signal or a green light

- Yield to pedestrians crossing the highway in a marked or unmarked crosswalk at an intersection where there are no traffic lights or control signals
- Not overtake nor pass a vehicle that stops at an intersection or crosswalk for a pedestrian or bicyclist

Pedestrians are required to:

- Yield to drivers when crossing a road where there is no intersection or crosswalk, or where the pedestrian does not have a walk signal and vehicles have a green signal
- Not suddenly move into the path of a closely approaching vehicle that does not have sufficient time to yield
- Walk on the left side of a road when not on a sidewalk

Staying safe on the roads

Children and pedestrians with limited mobility are at a greater risk than others on the roads. As families head out for Halloween activities later this month, drivers will need an enhanced awareness of their surroundings. Find guidance for teaching children about safe walking on the [WisDOT website](#).

Other ways to keep pedestrians safe include:

- Put the phone down; sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for five seconds, at 55 mph, that's like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed
- Obey all posted signs and speed limits; driving a few miles over the speed limit can be the difference between life and death for a pedestrian
- Do not block crosswalks when stopping at intersections
- Take extra care while driving around schools, playgrounds, and neighborhoods, especially at bus stops
- Avoid alcohol and drugs when driving

Pedestrians can take steps to keep themselves safe, too. Always:

- Follow the rules of the road and obey signs and signals
- Walk on sidewalks whenever available; if there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic and as far from traffic as possible
- Cross streets at crosswalks or intersections; if a crosswalk is not available, find a well-lit area with a clear view of traffic and wait for a gap that allows enough time to cross safely
- Watch for cars entering or exiting driveways or backing up in parking lots
- Take extra care at night and at dusk when chances of injury increase; wear reflective clothing or lights to be more visible

Resources and other information about pedestrian safety are [available online](#).