

Safety Tips for Pedestrians

for cars, not for people on foot. The pedestrian

- Cross defensively. Pedestrian signals assign right-of-way to pedestrians, but are not a guarantee of safety.
- Look in all directions for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles before crossing.
- Always check for turning vehicles before stepping off the curb.
- If there is a push button, press the button and wait for the pedestrian signal to display the "Walk" indication. This will guarantee adequate crossing time.
- Do not *begin* to cross when a flashing or steady "Don't Walk" indication is displayed

Other Traffic Information Brochures Available

- Bicycles on Buses
- Crosswalks
- Left Turn Signals
- Parking on Residential Streets
- Speed Humps
- Speed Limits
- Speed Limit Enforcement in Our City
- Traffic Signals
- Vegetation & Traffic Safety



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Pedestrian Signals



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Informative Facts

PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS

When traffic volumes were much lower than they are today, pedestrians could take their cues from the same traffic lights as motorists. Things are more complicated today, so it shouldn't be surprising that questions are frequently asked about pedestrian signals which were introduced to improve pedestrian safety.

- Why do signals always change before I get across the street?
- Why do some intersections have pedestrian signals and others don't?
- Pedestrian signals used to say "walk " or "don't walk". What do those new signals mean?

Why are pedestrian signals available at some intersections and not at others?

Pedestrian signals are installed for two main reasons: a high volume of foot traffic at an intersection, or the signals directing motorists do not meet the needs of pedestrians.

For example, some intersections are laid out at odd angles, and traffic signals can't be seen by pedestrians. In other cases, turning and merging lanes make intersections so complex that special provisions must be made for pedestrians.

Shouldn't pedestrian signals be available at every intersection? Wouldn't that make things safer?

If existing traffic signals meet the needs of people on foot, are easy to see and provide plenty of time to cross safely, there is no need for pedestrian signals. Pedestrian signals will not improve safety in such cases, and are costly to purchase, install and operate. However, it is generally the policy of the City to install pedestrian signals at all traffic signals where pedestrians are permitted to cross the street.

Why are the words "walk" and "don't walk" being replaced by symbols?

Transportation engineers worldwide are moving toward the use of symbol signs in place of word signs because they are easier for people to comprehend in a shorter amount of time.

In the case of pedestrian signals, both "word" and "symbol" signs are currently in use. Here's what they mean:



"Walk", or walking pedestrian symbol, means you may begin crossing.



A flashing or steady "Don't Walk", or an upraised hand symbol, means it's too late to begin crossing. Don't enter the street, but finish crossing if you have already started.

Why does it always say "don't walk before I've completed crossing the street?"

The flashing "Don't Walk", or upraised hand, is a warning to people who have not yet entered the intersection that it's too late to safely cross the street before the traffic signal changes allowing cars to proceed. Signals are timed to allow plenty of time for people who have already started walking to safely cross the street.



Is it really necessary for me to push a button to activate the pedestrian signal? Can't I just wait for the light to change?

At locations where buttons are available for pedestrians, it is because the traffic signal is timed for cars, not for people on foot. The pedestrian push button causes the signal controller to "extend" the green time for pedestrians giving you enough time to safely cross the street. You only need to push the button once for it to be activated.

Even when crossing an intersection with the "walk" signal, pedestrians should always watch out for potential conflicts with vehicles. Drivers may be making right or left turns across the crosswalk and may not see the pedestrian in the crosswalk.

