



[Pedestrians Beware: How to Avoid Harm When Crossing the Street](#)

by [John Demas](#) on 08/18/09 at 11:12 am

Far too many news stories revolve around pedestrians who've been injured or killed while simply trying to cross a Sacramento street. In fact, Americans everywhere face similar dangers each day. Careless car and truck drivers, often foolishly interacting with their cell phones, put everyone at risk. They cut corners sharply and rarely glance to see if pedestrians (who have the right of way) are traversing the crosswalks. Law enforcement officers stay frustrated since they don't have enough personnel to keep up the increased ticketing efforts and other operations that help remind drivers to look out for pedestrians.

As was noted in a [Sacramento Bee editorial](#), pedestrians seem to be at their biggest disadvantage when crossing (1) multi-lane avenues when all of the drivers don't stop or (2) streets where either right- or left-turn drivers are so consumed with dodging oncoming cars that they forget to look out for pedestrians.

How can we each better protect ourselves as pedestrians? What facts might help drivers permanently remember to show consistent respect for the safety needs of those on foot? Hopefully, the following facts and suggested behaviors will help keep all of us safe as both drivers and pedestrians:

- [A 2002 study](#) found that Sacramento County is the eighth most dangerous one in the state of California. Even more dangerous were the counties of Los Angeles and Solano.
- Over 80 percent (80%) of crosswalk accidents are caused by the driver, not the pedestrian. (See reference to [UC Berkeley study](#)).
- **In 2007, about thirteen (13) pedestrians a day were killed** in accidents involving careless drivers. (This equaled a 2007 death rate of [4,654 pedestrians](#)).
- [70,000 pedestrians were injured](#) in traffic accidents in 2007
- [The elderly are more likely than others to be injured in pedestrian/auto accidents.](#) Sixteen (16) percent of all the pedestrian fatalities during one recent year involved people aged 70 and older. About six (6) percent of all those injured in such accidents belonged to this same age group.

- The numbers for young children (and those age 15 and younger) are equally troubling. **In 2007, twenty percent (20%) of all kids between the ages of five and nine killed in traffic accidents were pedestrians.** Those age 15 and younger “accounted for eight percent (8%) of the pedestrian fatalities for 2007 and twenty-three percent (23%) of all pedestrians injured in traffic crashes.” (See: NHTSA’s Traffic Safety Facts [2007 Data] at: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810994.PDF>)
- Never assume that drivers are paying close attention to you as a pedestrian. Always try to **make eye contact** with them, bearing in mind that you’re likely to be the biggest loser if there’s an accident.
- While you may need to hurry across the street to make it safely, don’t move so fast that you trip. If you normally carry a cane with you, use it.
- If you’re crossing the street at the same time as many other people, consider moving ahead of them so you can keep your eyes carefully focused on the drivers in the area.
- **If you drop something**, it’s better to leave it than risk being hit while you pick it up. You can certainly point towards it, hoping drivers can safely drive around the object as you move toward the safety of the sidewalk.
- **Don’t be afraid to yell out if someone is about to hit you.** Drivers are often on the phone or maybe unable to see you clearly due to the sun’s rays (or other distractions). If you want, you can keep a whistle in your pocket (or around your neck) for this same purpose.
- **Never forget the childhood rule of looking both ways before trying to cross any street.** Knowing you had the right of way won’t mean much to you if you wind up in a hospital bed after failing to be proactive about your safety.
- **Volunteer to help your local police department and all levels of local schools to create Pedestrian Safety Programs.**

Hopefully, you’ll always be able to keep yourself and your loved ones safe while crossing local streets or those in other cities. However, if you have already been injured as a pedestrian, please give us a call so we can help you evaluate your claim and pursue every financial remedy that’s legally available to you. We’ve been successfully representing both pedestrians and drivers for many years.