

DID YOU KNOW???

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE LAWS – LAWS FOR WALKING

This is the second of a three-part series on pedestrian and bicycle laws. Last week's article was from the view of the driver and what to do when encountering pedestrians and bicyclists. Today, we'll discuss the **laws for when you're walking**. Much of the information contained in this article is provided by the NYS Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. We thank this organization for providing a comprehensive and easily understood condensation of NYS Vehicle and Traffic Laws (VTL) that are applicable to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Even though you are not driving, as a pedestrian, you must obey all traffic control devices, which are signals, signs and pavement markings [NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL), section 1150]. If you are at an intersection controlled by a traffic signal, in most cases on a state highway where there are sidewalks, there will also be a pedestrian walk/don't walk signal. If such a signal is present, you must obey it. In our villages, we are lucky to have the "count-down timers", so you know when the walk signal will change and traffic will flow. If the white "Walking Person" is flashing, it's OK to begin crossing. When the Flashing Red Hand/Don't Walk signal begins, don't start crossing, but if you have already begun to cross, you may continue until you have reached the far side. If the signal shows a Steady Red Hand/Don't Cross signal, do not start to cross – wait for the next walk signal.

Walk time is normally sufficient to allow a pedestrian crossing in the crosswalk who left the curb or shoulder at the end of the "walking person" symbol to travel at a walking speed of 3.5 feet per second to at least the far side of the traveled way or to a median of sufficient width for a pedestrian to wait. This timing is based on national standards as contained in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. In the case of a slow pedestrian, once a pedestrian has begun to cross, even if the walk signal ends, vehicular traffic must yield to that pedestrian.

When you are in a crosswalk where there isn't a traffic signal, drivers must yield the right-of-way to you [VTL, section 11151]. At mid-block locations, if there isn't a crosswalk, sign or signal, you must yield the right-of-way to all vehicles on the roadway [VTL, section 1152]. Although crossing mid-block, (sometimes erroneously referred to as jay-walking) is allowed under VTL, it is always safer to cross at an intersection.

When walking along a street or road, if there is a sidewalk that is safe to use, you must walk on the sidewalk. If there are no sidewalks, or if the sidewalk is unsafe, you may walk on the left side of the roadway or shoulder facing traffic [VTL, section 1156-b]. Stay as far to the left as possible.

When walking along a road or street, or even crossing it, make eye contact with drivers – don't just assume that drivers will give you the right-of-way if the law mandates it. A pedestrian will never win in a vehicle-pedestrian collision. Another good tip is to be seen - wear bright or reflective clothing, especially at night.

Next week, we will discuss laws for when you are bicycling.

For more articles on traffic law and safety, go to the traffic safety board's web site at: www.franklincony.org and click on "Traffic Safety Board" under departments then look for Did You Know articles under "services".