

DID YOU KNOW???

PEDESTRIANS – WHEN CROSSING AT A SIGNAL, “PUSH THE BUTTON”

In July, this column ran a series of “Did You Know” articles dealing with pedestrian and bicycle laws and bicycle safety. Since these articles ran, it has been brought to my attention that far too many pedestrians fail to push the button to activate the pedestrian phase of the traffic signal.

In larger cities, most pedestrian crosswalk signals activate on each complete signal cycle, meaning pedestrians will get a “WALK” signal without pushing any buttons. Of interest, this crossing phase is simultaneous with the parallel traffic movement, and is called a “permissive” crossing phase.

However, in the villages in Franklin County, where there is a pedestrian signal, a pedestrian **MUST** push a button to activate the “walk” signal. This is because there are so few pedestrians crossing our streets that it is not necessary to restrict traffic if there are no pedestrians waiting to cross. Until a pedestrian pushes the button, the “DON’T WALK” signal will remain illuminated and will not change to the “walk” signal.

In the Village of Malone, the same is true for the pedestrian cross light at the corner of W. Main and Webster streets at the YMCA. Too often pedestrians try to cross at this location without pushing the crosswalk button. If you don’t push the button, the flashing yellow beacons over the four lanes of traffic, calling attention to drivers that someone is crossing this busy highway, will not activate, making the cross much more dangerous for pedestrians.

While on the subject of pedestrian crosswalk signals, I have often seen walkers push the button multiple times, or even push and hold the button. This will not get you the “walk” signal any faster. Pushing the button once tells the computer that a person wishes to cross a particular street, and the signal program will incorporate that request into the signal timing, resulting in the “walk” signal being given at some point.

One last comment. Sometimes an impatient pedestrian pushes the button, doesn’t want to wait for the signal to change, so crosses anyway. This is illegal. Where pedestrian crosswalk signals are in place, it is a violation of Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL) section 1112 to cross when the “DON’T WALK” signal is illuminated.

In summary, when crossing at an intersection controlled by a pedestrian signal, remember to push the button to activate the “WALK” phase of the signal.

For more information on traffic law and traffic safety, visit the Traffic Safety Board web site at: www.franklincony.org and go to Traffic Safety Board under “Departments”. Look for us on Facebook as well. You may also contact me by email at: dwerner151@verizon.net