

DID YOU KNOW???

TURNING MOTORISTS MUST YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS

In most all of our Upstate villages, far too many drivers fail to give pedestrians crossing at intersections their legal right-of-way. Nary a week goes by that I don't hear about a pedestrian legally crossing at an intersection with a traffic signal where some driver making a right or left turn almost hits the pedestrian.

These traffic safety articles have addressed this problem numerous times over the past 7-8 years so I doubt that this article will make much of a difference, but at least we will try again. This is really not rocket science – the only thing you as a driver must remember is that any time you are making a right OR left turn at any intersection, whether or not it has a three-color traffic signal, whether there is a pedestrian signal or not, you **MUST** yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian. This is true if you are turning on a green light or making a legal right turn on red – you **MUST** yield to pedestrians.

Violations of this are so common that the NYS DOT has prohibited right turns on red at numerous intersections because of pedestrian conflicts. Most of these conflicts are with drivers who don't stop before making the right on red. If we all followed the law and made the required stop before turning, and yielded to pedestrians when required, the privilege of "right turn on red" would be allowed at more intersections.

When a turning driver has the green light, this is *exactly* the same portion of the signal cycle that the pedestrian is supposed to be crossing the cross street, so a driver turning left or right should expect pedestrians to be in the crosswalk. Too often drivers turning left are so intent on looking for a break in oncoming traffic that they fail to also look for a pedestrian crossing the street that they intend to turn onto. This can result in either an incident or a near miss.

This problem is actually exacerbated in our rural areas because of a **LACK** of pedestrian traffic – the more pedestrians crossing, the more drivers are aware of their presence. Our problem is that more often than not, there are no pedestrians crossing; thus we get too complacent, and forget about watching for foot traffic.

In all the cases described above, section 1111 of Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL) states that turning motorists "shall yield the right-of-way to pedestrians within a marked or unmarked crosswalk at the intersection". So, looking out for pedestrians is just one more thing to challenge the driver and the pedestrian trying to cross safely. But, it is a very important challenge – not to be ignored. In any vehicle-pedestrian collision, the vehicle always wins, even if the driver is wrong.

Lastly, if you are riding with someone that is violating this VTL, don't just ignore it – say something. The driver may not realize how dangerous his/her driving is.

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". Visit us on Facebook as well. You may also contact me by email at: dwerner151@verizon.net or call me at 483-1882.