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# Driving for Pedestrian Safety

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**How to be prepared and  
prevent injuries on  
New Mexico's roads**

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**New Mexico** DEPARTMENT OF  
**TRANSPORTATION**  
MOBILITY FOR EVERYONE

# New Mexico has a problem.

From 2016 to 2021, New Mexico has had the highest rate of pedestrians killed on our roads in the US. Since 2015, the number of pedestrians killed on New Mexico's roadways has almost doubled. In 2022, a pedestrian was killed on our roadways every 3.5 days on average.

**But it doesn't have to be this way.**



New Mexico is Ranked #1 for Pedestrian Fatalities Per Capita.



**A Pedestrian is Killed in New Mexico Approximately Every 3.5 Days.**



## Pedestrian deaths and injuries are preventable.



As a driver, we need your help to keep everyone safe. The faster a vehicle is traveling when it hits a pedestrian, the more likely the pedestrian will be killed or injured. Serious injuries can also be life altering.

**Slowing down, following speed limits, and looking out for pedestrians saves lives.**

## Higher driving speeds make dying from being hit by a car more likely.

If hit by a car driving at...

... the pedestrian survives.

... the pedestrian is killed.

20 MPH



30 MPH



40 MPH



## What makes crashes more likely?



In New Mexico, the following situations and behaviors contribute to vehicle crashes with pedestrians:

▶ **Drivers not paying attention to the road.**

- Don't text or scroll through music while driving. Pay attention to the road and your surroundings.

▶ **Times when it's harder to see. If you can't see well, slow down. It can be hard to see pedestrians when:**

- It is dark, or at dusk/dawn,
- There is severe weather such as snow, rain, dust storms or when there is fog,
- The sun is in your eyes, such as in the morning or late afternoon/evening.

▶ **Driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs**

- Alcohol and drugs reduce your ability to focus, and your ability to react when driving.

Pedestrians are people too and may make mistakes. Drivers need to pay attention and be ready to stop for pedestrians. A simple mistake shouldn't lead to injury or death.



## Who to look out for.



Some people experience the road differently. Look out and be prepared for pedestrians who need your attention.

▶ **Older adults** may walk slower and need extra time to cross.

▶ **People using a wheelchair** may need more time to cross the road, and may have to enter the road if there are objects in their path or no sidewalk ramps.

▶ **Young children** do not understand the danger of roadways and may unexpectedly run into the road.

▶ **People who are blind or visually impaired** may use a cane (which may or may not be white) or guide dog and often use vehicle sounds to know when to cross a road. Drivers must slow down and yield or stop.

▶ **People who are deaf or hard of hearing** may not be aware of traffic around them. Use additional care in areas signed for the presence of deaf people.



## What does New Mexico law say?



The information in this brochure is more than a suggestion. This brochure is based on New Mexico's laws around driving on our roadways.

▶ **66-7-334 NMSA 1978. Pedestrians have the right-of-way in crosswalks at unsignalized intersections**

- Drivers must yield to pedestrians in marked AND unmarked crosswalks
- Do not pass another vehicle stopped at a marked or unmarked crosswalk.

▶ **66-7-337 NMSA 1978. Drivers must exercise due care**

- Drivers must always exercise due care to avoid collisions with pedestrians, including when observing a child or any confused or incapacitated person upon a roadway.

# Common Pedestrian Situations

Here are some of the most common situations where pedestrians are hit by vehicles and what you can do to avoid them. **Take extra caution as a driver to avoid crashes in these situations.**



## Pedestrians crossing the road

Yield for pedestrians at marked and unmarked crosswalks.

Always stop at pedestrian crossings when another vehicle is already stopped. The vehicle could be blocking your view of a pedestrian who is crossing. Make sure the crosswalk is clear before continuing to drive.

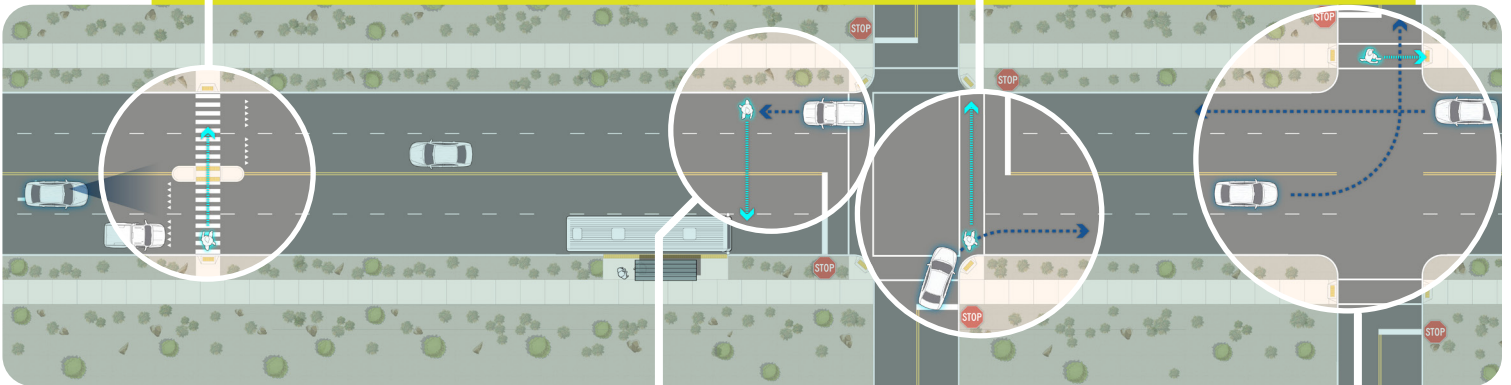
Even if a crossing pedestrian is not in a marked or unmarked crosswalk, exercise due care.



## Drivers making right-hand turns at stop signs or red lights

Even though pedestrians have the right-of-way when using a crosswalk, drivers are often too focused on oncoming cars to their left to see pedestrians crossing on their right. Drivers often block or move through the crosswalk without making sure that there is no one entering the crosswalk from either direction.

Before entering the intersection, check for oncoming traffic and pedestrians on your left, then always look to your right to check for pedestrians who may be in or entering the crosswalk, and proceed with caution.



## Pedestrians running into the roadway

Watch for pedestrians at ALL times especially around transit stops.

Sometimes pedestrians run into the street to catch a bus.

A bus may block a pedestrian and driver's view of each other, causing a conflict.

Driving at a safe speed gives you the time to react if a pedestrian does something unexpected in the road.



## Drivers making left-hand turns

Especially in busy traffic, drivers often focus on looking for a gap in oncoming traffic so they can turn left. They forget to make sure no one is in the crosswalk before they begin to turn.

Check for pedestrians crossing or entering the crosswalk BEFORE beginning to make a left-hand turn. Don't get caught having to stop in the middle of the oncoming lane because there is someone in the crosswalk.



## Pedestrians along the roadway

Watch for pedestrians walking or rolling along the roadway and give them space when passing.

Many roads in New Mexico don't have sidewalks. Others have gaps in the sidewalks or light poles that block the sidewalk. Pedestrians or those using wheelchairs may have to walk or roll along the side of the road.

Leave space between pedestrians and your vehicle when you pass them. It is dangerous and scary for pedestrians to be passed closely by fast cars.



## Driving near school buses

Always stop for stopped school buses (in your lane OR the oncoming lane).

It is illegal to pass a stopped school bus when the bus stop sign is out. Children will need to cross the road in front of the bus. The bus may block your view of the crossing children.

Reference: Section 66-7-347 NMSA 1978)



## Workers in the roadway

Watch for workers in the road around construction sites.

Being a road construction worker is a very dangerous job. Be extra cautious when approaching construction zones and slow down for the safety of crews. Workers may be walking along or crossing the road. Always obey traffic control workers (flaggers).



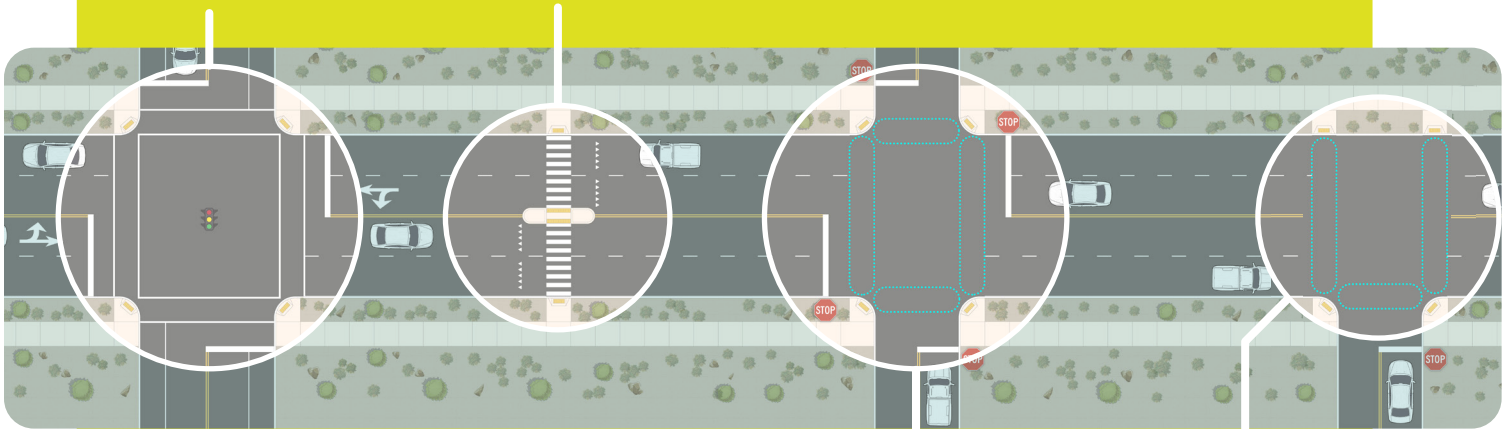
# Types of Pedestrian Crossings

The following are the most common types of pedestrian crossings that you will encounter as a driver.



## Marked Crosswalks

Marked crosswalks are painted with white lines across the road. Two styles of crosswalks in New Mexico are shown in the two drawings below. Crosswalks can be located at intersections, or at midblock locations (not at an intersection).



## Unmarked Crosswalks

Unmarked crosswalks exist on all sides of an intersection, regardless of whether they are painted on the ground. They are a visual continuation of the sidewalk (or roadway edges in the absence of sidewalks) across the roadway. Vehicles must yield to pedestrians in unmarked crosswalks.



## Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB)

A PHB is a traffic signal that stops vehicles so that pedestrians can cross at locations without stop signs or traffic signals.

A PHB is only active when a pedestrian pushes the button, the PHB is dark otherwise.

### ► A PHB will show various colors and flashes that mean different things for drivers:

- Flashing yellow light: A pedestrian has activated the crossing.
- Solid yellow light: Slow and prepare to stop.
- **Solid red lights: Stop for pedestrians to cross.**
- Flashing red lights: Stop first. Then proceed with caution once the crosswalk is clear of pedestrians.



## Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)

An RRFB is a warning sign and flashing light that helps drivers yield to pedestrians that are trying to cross at a marked crosswalk. RRFBs help drivers better see the crossing location.

### ► How to use an RRFB as a driver:

- Flashing lights: A pedestrian has pushed the button on the RRFB and is waiting to cross. Drivers must yield to pedestrians waiting to cross or in the crosswalk.
- Do not pass another vehicle that is slowing down or has stopped at the crosswalk. The other vehicle could be blocking your view of the pedestrian.
- Once the crosswalk is clear, you can continue to drive.

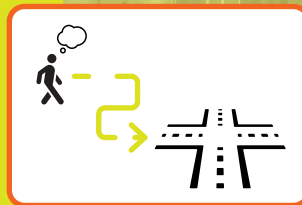


# Activities

*Try these activities out and put yourself in the shoes of pedestrians.*

## Activity #1

Go for a walk and visit a nearby intersection. Take a mental note of everything going on around.



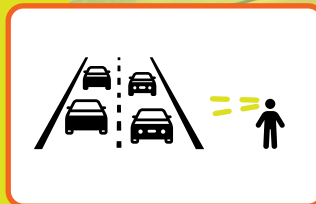
**How does it make you feel?**



**Do you feel safe?**

## Activity #2

Find a safe spot near a road where you have a good view of drivers. Take a few minutes to count the number of distracted drivers.



**How many did you count?**



**What were the distractions?**



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