

UNCONTROLLED CROSSWALK SAFETY

The California Vehicle Code defines a “crosswalk” as the portion of a roadway at an intersection, which is an extension of the curb and property lines of the intersecting street (typically, the sidewalk or pathway). It is also defined as any portion of a roadway that is marked as a pedestrian crossing location by painted lines or other markings. Crosswalks can be either “marked” or “unmarked.” A “marked crosswalk” is any crosswalk that is delineated by white or yellow painted markings placed on the pavement. All other crosswalk locations are “unmarked.” All intersections, therefore, have legal crosswalks, whether or not lines are marked. An uncontrolled crosswalk is one where motorists do not have to stop for a stop sign or a traffic signal.

California law states that a pedestrian may not step out in front of a vehicle that is close enough to be a hazard, while a driver must yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian already crossing the street whether in a marked or unmarked crosswalk. A pedestrian is crossing the street when any part of their body, wheelchair, cane, crutch, or bicycle (if they are dismounted and walking) moves into the roadway in a crosswalk with the intent to proceed.

Whether or not a painted crosswalk is present, pedestrians and drivers must use reasonable caution at crosswalks as illustrated in the following safety tips:

PEDESTRIAN TIPS:

1. Stop on the curb or shoulder while looking for a gap in traffic.
2. Look left-right-left before crossing any street.
3. Do not assume that drivers can or will stop, or that because you see them that they see you.
4. Establish eye contact with drivers/bicyclists when possible.
5. Do not step out in front of approaching cars or bicycles until you know they see you and come to a stop.
6. Hold small children by the hand when crossing.
7. Always cross at intersections or marked crosswalks. If possible, choose routes that allow you to cross at a stop sign or signal.
8. Look over your shoulder to watch for turning cars.
9. While in the crosswalk, watch for approaching cars as other cars stopped at the crosswalk may block their visibility
10. At night, wear reflective materials or carry a flashlight to make yourself more visible.
11. Be extra cautious at mid-block crosswalks because drivers may not be watching for pedestrians.

MOTORIST AND BICYCLIST TIPS:

12. Drivers and bicyclists MUST yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, even if there are no pavement markings.
13. Be prepared to come to a complete stop at least 20 feet back from the crossing.
14. When stopping at an intersection, do not block the crosswalk.
15. Wait until pedestrians have crossed at least one lane beyond yours before proceeding.
16. Be alert for children using the crosswalks; they sometimes dart out into traffic.
17. Never pass stopped or slowing vehicles at crosswalks.
18. Use special care when turning at intersections.
19. Follow all posted speed limits.