



What is a crosswalk?

Crosswalks are either marked or unmarked. The California Vehicle Code defines a "crosswalk" as the portion of a roadway at an intersection, which is an extension of the curb of the intersecting street or is any other portion of a roadway which is marked as a pedestrian crossing identified by painted lines. A marked crosswalk is any crosswalk which is delineated by white or yellow painted markings placed on the pavement. All other crosswalk locations are unmarked.

Are marked crosswalks safer?

The City of San Diego conducted a study in the 1970's, and the report conclusions are often cited as the first comprehensive study of crosswalk safety. Many of the findings were confirmed by a nationwide study in early 2000 by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) conducted by the University of North Carolina.

The study reported that "...more pedestrian collisions occur in marked crosswalks than in unmarked crosswalks by a ratio of approximately 6:1, particularly in wide streets of more than 3 travel lanes. In terms of usage, there are approximately two times as many pedestrian collisions in marked collisions as

compared with unmarked crosswalks. This can be attributed to a false sense of security that pedestrians have in a crosswalk. It's been found that pedestrians pay less attention due to a mobile device or talking with friends. Evidence suggests that this collision record is not due to the crosswalk being marked as much as it is a reflection on the pedestrians' attitude and behavior when using the marked crosswalk..." Since the 2000 study, additional crosswalk studies have been undertaken by the Federal Highway Administration in 2005 that indicates, marked crosswalks across 3 or more lanes in the absence of controlled crossings like stop signs or a traffic signal is not supported.

How are crosswalks used?

At any crosswalk (marked or unmarked) drivers in California must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians per section 21950(a) of the California Vehicle Code (CVC). **This does not relieve the pedestrian from the duty of using due care for his or her safety. Pedestrians are strongly encouraged to make eye contact with approaching drivers.** Crosswalks are marked mainly to encourage pedestrians to use a particular crossing. Studies conducted support minimal installation of marked crosswalks, particularly where there

are 3 or more vehicle lanes of traffic. If you see a marked crosswalk, it is because there have been studies conducted that justify the installation with a traffic study showing that significant number of pedestrians crossing throughout the entire day and not short durations. Other site considerations are evaluated like geometry of the road; like horizon vertical curvature that may limit visibility. Furthermore, additional improvements are required to support any pedestrian crossing three or more lanes.

What causes collisions at a marked crosswalk?

Research suggests that marked crosswalks give pedestrians a false sense of security as earlier cited. Pedestrians often step off the curb into the crosswalk expecting drivers of vehicles approaching the crosswalk to stop. However, drivers frequently fail to stop causing a pedestrian collision. **At all crosswalks, both marked and unmarked, it is the pedestrian's responsibility to be cautious and alert before starting to cross the street.** At mid-block crosswalks on multi-lane roadways, another frequent factor in causing collisions involves the driver of a vehicle in the lane nearest to the curb stopping for a pedestrian that is waiting to cross or who is already in the crosswalk. The driver of a second vehicle traveling in the lane next to the stopped vehicle tries to pass the stopped vehicle and hits the pedestrian,

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even though it is illegal for drivers to pass a stopped vehicle at a crosswalk. The condition is called multiple lane occlusion. Pedestrians should be very cautious when walking in a crosswalk as they cross from one lane to another, especially when their visibility is limited by vehicles already stopped at the crosswalk.

Where are crosswalks marked?

Crosswalks are marked at intersections where there is substantial conflict between vehicle and pedestrian movements, where significant pedestrian concentrations occur, where pedestrians could not otherwise recognize the proper place to cross, and where traffic movements are controlled.

Examples of such locations are:

- 1.) Approved school crossings in residential areas giving route guidance for safe routes to school.
- 2.) Signalized intersection or four way stops

These examples follow the philosophy of marking crosswalks as a form of education and encouragement. In the first case, we encourage school children to use a crossing which is normally being monitored.

For more information on various programs, visit the City of Fairfield's web page.

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Traffic/Transportation Engineering

Crosswalks

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