

Pedestrian Safety

Approximately 64,000 pedestrians are injured in motor vehicle crashes annually, and in 2005 a total of 4,881 pedestrians were killed. Groups that are at higher risk for injuries and death are children of the ages from 0-16 and adults ages 70 and older. In 2005, 69 percent of pedestrian deaths were males. (Highway Loss Data Institute Statistics)

Safety statistics show that pedestrian injuries remain the second leading cause of unintentional injury related deaths among children ages 5 to 14. SAFE KIDS Coalition reports that in the U.S. a child is killed in a pedestrian crash every 90 minutes.

Children's size, cognitive ability, and undeveloped vision are some of the factors related to pedestrian injuries. Environmental factors such as speeding drivers can also create a risk. Surveys reveal that two-thirds of drivers speed in school zones. (National Survey of Speeding in School Zones, October 2000)

Waterloo Fire Rescue offers the following safety tips for pedestrians:

- Know what to expect from young children. Children under the age of ten lack good judgment and need help from an adult to guide them in making good decisions regarding their safety.
- Watch children when they are playing. They do not always think before they act. Many children are injured when they run out into the road to retrieve a toy such as a ball or Frisbee.
- Children are egocentric. They have a difficult time seeing outside of the box. They think that if they can see a car, then the driver must see them.
- Children lack the ability to judge speed, direction and distance.
- A child's small size makes it harder for them to see traffic and for drivers to see them.
- Parents should immerse their children in safety talks. Teach children pedestrian safety, review it on a regular basis, and observe your child's outdoor play. Make each moment count. Teach the teachable moments.
- Teach children under the age of ten years old to never enter the street without a grown-up.
- Do not make older children responsible for watching younger siblings. An adult needs to be with a young child at all times.
- Always cross in a crosswalk or at an intersection. Do not cross between parked cars. Be a role model for your children.
- Only walk across the street when you see the walk sign.



- Teaching your child to look both ways before crossing is *not* enough. Teach your child to wave to the driver and to make eye contact with him/her to make sure that the driver has seen them.

Teaching your child safety behaviors and reviewing them on a regular basis is one of the most important responsibilities you have as a parent. It doesn't have to be time consuming.

Teach safety behaviors at teachable times. Review one or two key safety concepts with your child each day. One strategy might be to make it part of your bedtime ritual: healthy snack, brush teeth, pajamas, read a story, *talk safety*, kiss goodnight. It can be that simple. Waterloo Fire Rescue believes in "*Keeping Waterloo safe because you care about your kids and so do we.*"