

The Best Ideas to Avoid Pedestrian Accidents in the Houston Area

The law in Texas is that pedestrians have just as much right use the road as motorists do, provided that they obey the rules of the road. The reality in the Houston area, though, is that pedestrians' rights are often not respected, with potentially deadly consequences. It goes without saying that pedestrians are very vulnerable in the event of a wreck. When a car hits a pedestrian's unprotected body, even at a low speed, serious and fatal injuries are common.

According to a [Houston Chronicle article](#), as of February 8, 2019, over 19,000 motorists in the Houston area had been involved in accidents. Just 12 of those drivers (0.06%) were killed. In contrast, only 130 pedestrians were involved in accidents, but 11 of them (8.4%) were killed. While more than three-quarters of the drivers walked away without any injuries at all, 121 of the 130 pedestrians – 93% – were injured (or killed.)

It's more important than ever for motorists to share the road appropriately with pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

Infrastructure improvements can make a difference, but it's ultimately up to drivers

In a densely populated area such as Houston, investing in infrastructure to accommodate the large number of pedestrians is essential.

In certain places, for example, adding a median in the center of the roadway would give pedestrians a place to stop and wait for traffic. Wider sidewalks can help, as can more clearly marked sidewalks and warning signs intended to call motorists' attention to the presence of pedestrians.

At the end of the day, though, the responsibility for pedestrian safety falls on drivers. Houston-area drivers are not doing their part.

Cultural change is needed to protect Houston-area pedestrians

An audit conducted by federal engineers into dangerous intersections in Houston is still under way, but the evidence compiled so far sheds light on the problem.

“Drivers were observed turning right at the intersections between groups of people walking, failing to look right before turning right on red, and proceeding into the intersection when the turn was blocked by pedestrians,” wrote officials cited in the *Chronicle* article, adding that many motorists displayed aggressive behaviors such as making rude gestures or honking their horns at pedestrians who had the legal right of way.

In short, too many Houston motorists don't believe that they must share the road, even though that's what the law says.

Part of the problem, too, is ignorance of the rules of the road. For example, while most drivers know that they should yield to pedestrians in marked crosswalks, many are not aware that an

“unmarked crosswalk” exists at any intersection without marked crosswalks, perpendicular to the roads (but not diagonal across the intersection). Pedestrians in unmarked crosswalks have the same rights (and responsibilities) as pedestrians in marked crosswalks.

Distracted drivers need to keep their eyes on the road to protect pedestrians

In recent years, perhaps the biggest threat to pedestrians has become distracted driving. Motorists who are texting or talking on their phones, using “infotainment” systems in their vehicles, or engaging in other types of distracting behavior may still notice a car in front of them, but not a pedestrian.

This is particularly dangerous at intersections. Drivers may think it’s perfectly safe to send a text while stopped at a red light or stop sign as long as their eyes are back on the road when they start moving again. The truth is that after you send a text, your brain remains distracted for another minute or two – and during that time, you’re putting yourself and other road users, especially pedestrians, at risk.

Motorists have a responsibility to put safety first. Too often, when they don’t, others are badly hurt. That’s why we fight so hard to hold negligent drivers and their insurance companies accountable. If you’ve been injured in a pedestrian accident, contact Smith & Hassler, Attorneys at Law for a free consultation.