

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Eliminating distracted driving has been a high priority for Federal and State transportation organizations in recent years, but what about **distracted walking**?



While distracted driving has gotten headlines, pedestrians are increasingly turning to electronic distractions while walking and even biking.

Several states, including New York, have considered laws intended to curb use of hand-held devices such as cell phones and music players on sidewalks and crosswalks. The use of music players and cell phones while walking reduces a pedestrian's situational awareness and can prevent them from hearing or seeing oncoming vehicles, anticipating turning movements, and even realizing that they are about to step into a busy roadway. A less obvious risk that distracted walking poses is a motorist's reduced ability to predict pedestrian movement through cues such as eye contact. A 2007 study conducted in suburban and urban settings provides support to these claims by examining the behavior of pedestrians using mobile phones. The study's findings suggest that pedestrians using mobile phones show both reduced situational awareness as well as increased unsafe behavior at crosswalks.

Though pedestrian fatalities due to portable devices represent a small percentage (0.3%) of reported incidents, over 2,000 pedestrian deaths in the U.S. were due to distraction, inattention or improper behavior by the pedestrian.

In the world of bicycle & pedestrian advocacy, it can be easy to fixate on motorist behavior, but pedestrian responsibilities are equally important and just as likely to contribute to an accident.

THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION LISTS THE FOLLOWING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PEDESTRIANS:

