



AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

21 ACADIA STREET • AMHERST, NOVA SCOTIA • B4H 4W3 • (902) 667-7227 • FAX: (902) 667-0268

Crosswalk safety is a topic that people have raised with me during my foot patrols in the downtown. In the past few years we have investigated multiple incidents of pedestrians in crosswalks being struck by vehicles. We also receive reports of numerous near misses. In my conversations with the public I have heard pedestrians complain about drivers failing to yield and drivers who have complained about pedestrians proceeding to cross in front of them when they were so close to the crosswalk they had little time to react. They both ask who is responsible to ensure the pedestrian can cross safely. Well the answer is both. The laws respecting crosswalks are found in the Motor Vehicle Act. Separate sections of the Act speak to the crosswalks at intersections controlled by traffic signals and crosswalks that are not controlled by traffic signals. Section 125 of the Act covers crosswalks that are not controlled by traffic signals. I feel this section does a good job of explaining the responsibilities of both the pedestrian and driver. These are the portions of Section 125 which I feel clarifies these responsibilities. (Please note I have not included all of Section 125 in this article and I recommend you read the section in its entirety.)

125 (1) Where pedestrian movements are not controlled by traffic signals,

(a) the driver of a vehicle shall yield the right of way to a pedestrian lawfully within a crosswalk or stopped facing a crosswalk;

(3) A pedestrian shall not leave a curb or other place of safety and walk or run into the path of a vehicle that is so closely approaching that it is impractical for the driver of the vehicle to stop.

(6) This Section does not relieve a pedestrian or a driver of a vehicle from the duty to exercise due care. 2007, c. 45, s. 9.

Drivers should be actively scanning for pedestrians in or approaching crosswalks. Intersections can be challenging especially when making left or right hand turns, so take your time. Don't be in a rush.

Drivers should minimize distractions. This includes talking or texting on your cell phone, adjusting your stereo or GPS unit, or eating snacks. It only takes a second of inattentiveness to cause an accident that changes the lives of yourself and others forever.

Pedestrians must also do their part. It's an offence to enter a crosswalk when the "do not walk" signal is displayed. (It is not an offence if the "do not walk" signal is activated **after** the pedestrian has entered the crosswalk.) Pedestrians should attempt to make eye contact with drivers before

stepping off the curb. They also must make sure that approaching vehicles have enough time to stop before they begin crossing.

Pedestrians and drivers must both do their part to stay aware of their surroundings. This may mean that people will miss the odd text message or phone call, or they may have to wait a few seconds longer before the next vehicle comes to a stop, but in the long run you are providing a safe roadway for yourself and other drivers and pedestrians.