

PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS

Pedestrian signals were introduced to the public many years ago to improve the safety of people crossing our streets. Since being introduced, pedestrian signals in Massachusetts have gone from a "Red and Yellow" signal indication to "Walk" and "Don't Walk" indications to the universal symbols of the "Pedestrian Walking Symbol" and the "Upraised Hand Symbol." With these changes have come some confusion and questions concerning the meaning of these signal indications.

- Why are the words "walk" and don't walk" being replaced by symbols?
- Why does it always say "don't walk" before I've completed crossing the street?
- Can I count on a safe crossing if I carefully follow the pedestrian signals?

Why are the words "WALK" and "DON'T WALK" being replaced by symbols?

Transportation engineers world wide are moving towards the use of symbol signs in place of word signs because they are easier for people to comprehend in a shorter amount of time. Easily recognized symbols also accommodate people who can't read english.

In the case of pedestrian signals, both "word" and "symbol" signs are currently in use.

Here's what they mean:



"Walk" or walking pedestrian symbol means you may begin crossing.



A flashing or steady "Don't Walk" or an upraised hand symbol means it is too late to begin crossing. Don't enter the street but finish crossing if you have already started.

Why does it always say "DON'T WALK" before I've completed crossing the street?

The flashing "don't walk" or upraised hand is a warning to pedestrians who have not yet entered the crosswalk that it is too late to safely begin crossing the street before the traffic signal changes allowing cars to proceed. The signals are timed to allow adequate time for pedestrians who have already started crossing to safely complete crossing the street.

Is it necessary to push a button to activate the pedestrian signal? Can't I just wait for the light to change.

When pedestrian push buttons are available, it is because the traffic signal is timed for vehicles and the pedestrian crossing is intermittent. If you don't activate the pedestrian signal by pushing the button, the pedestrian walk light will

not be shown and there will not be enough time to safely cross the street. You only need to push the button once for it to be activated.

Can I count on safe crossing if I carefully follow the pedestrian signals?

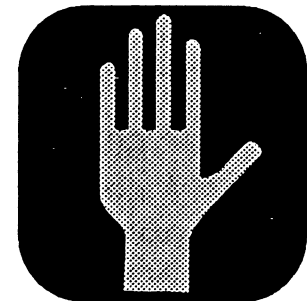
The signals assign your legal rights in the intersection, however, it is very important to be cautious when crossing the intersection.

The following suggestions are offered in the interest of safety:

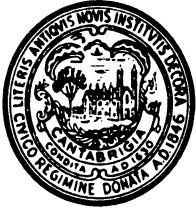
- Cross intersections defensively.
- When crossing the street regardless of the availability of signals, cross as quickly as possible. Minimize your time in the roadway.
- Always watch for turning vehicles. You have the legal right to be there, but that doesn't protect you from the carelessness of some motorists.

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PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS



***Traffic and Parking Department
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE***



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
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Deputy City Manager

September 11, 1995

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item No. 16, regarding study of "walk" signals, Director of the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department Susan Clippinger reports the following:

Within Cambridge, we use a standard of seven (7) seconds for the "walk" signal. The flashing "don't walk" signal is timed using a normal walking speed of four (4) feet per second. Both of these standards come from the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. At certain locations like areas where senior citizens cross, we have used a slower crossing speed (3 feet per second) to time the flashing "don't walk" signal. The Transportation Department will continue to do this as the need arises.

A brochure which answers frequently asked questions about pedestrian signals is attached.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over the typed name.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
attachment

Consent Agenda Item # 6

5-267

Response to Awaiting Report Item Number
Sixteen regarding a study of "walk"
signals.

for original order see
1995. City Manager
Requests # 87.

In City Council,

Sept. 11, 1995

Placed in file