



# YCPARMA Safety Journal

Yolo County Public Agency Risk Management Insurance Authority

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## The dangers of texting and walking

If you text while crossing the road, you might not make it to the other side. According to a new study published in the journal *Injury Prevention*, pedestrians who text or talk on their phones are less cautious and walk more slowly than undistracted walkers.

Researchers monitored 1,102 walkers at 20 different intersections in Seattle, Washington. They found that one out of every three people used their phones to talk, listen to music, or text while they crossed the street. On average, music listeners walked slightly faster than undistracted pedestrians, but texters took 18% longer to cross the street. Moreover, the texters were nearly four times more likely to disobey traffic signals, cross mid-intersection, or walk without looking both ways.

Not surprisingly, previous studies have found that while people know it's dangerous to walk or drive while using a phone, they continue to do it. No wonder the Centers for Disease Control estimated that 4,000 pedestrians are killed every year, and another 60,000 are injured because of phone related traffic collisions.

Ask yourself these questions before you next use your phone on the go:

### **1. Is someone walking behind me?**

"Any time you are inconveniencing, slowing down, or nearly bumping into someone else as a result of an activity conducted for your own convenience, you are, in fact, being rude," said Thomas Farley, author of *Modern Manners: The Thinking Person's Guide to Social Graces* and the blog, *What Manners Most*. In crowded areas, find a side street that's less congested before you text or talk.



### **2. Can I express myself clearly right now?**

While you're walking, your mind is likely to be focused on your destination more than the person you are communicating with. "Not only can a thoughtless text misconstrue your message, but a text laced with typos shows you just don't care," Farley said. Instead of pounding out a message on the go, think about what you'd like to say while you walk and write it out later.

### **3. Should I call instead of text?**

"While text messages are the perfect medium for sending brief notes (C u there @ 6?), it's best to discuss complex matters on the phone," Farley said. Unlike writing a text message, making a phone call leaves your eyes free to focus on the road and other obstacles. That said, don't assume that your friend is free to talk whenever you are. Send a quick text to ask if he or she has time to chat, and arrange to call him or her at a convenient time, ideally when neither of you are in transit.

### **4. Can I wait to make this call?**

Avoid phone conversations when you're standing shoulder-to-shoulder with strangers; unless your news is relevant to all, your voice is an unwelcome distraction. "If your call can wait", Farley said, "but your message is urgent, text it instead." Veer away from pedestrian and road traffic, stop walking, and switch off your phone's keyboard sounds, and text away.



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### From the California Department of Motor Vehicles

#### Three Feet for Safety Act effective 9/16/14

A new California law is requiring drivers to maintain a distance of three feet when passing cyclists on the road. The Three Feet for Safety Act is the latest sign that, as more people opt to get out of their cars and onto their bicycles, more safety precautions are necessary to create a safer roadway for both motorists and cyclists.

The new law states that if a driver is unable to give a cyclist three feet, due to traffic or road conditions (including the weather and width of the roadway), the driver must instead slow to a reasonable speed and pass when doing so would not endanger the bicyclist. Violators of the law could face a starting fine of \$35. The fine could jump to \$220 if a collision resulting in bodily injury occurs between a motorist and cyclist.

See below for the full Three Feet for Safety Act.



21760. (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the Three Feet for Safety Act.

(b) The driver of a motor vehicle overtaking and passing a bicycle that is proceeding in the same direction on a highway shall pass in compliance with the requirements of this article applicable to overtaking and passing a vehicle, and shall do so at a safe distance that does not interfere with the safe operation of the overtaken bicycle, having due regard for the size and speed of the motor vehicle and the bicycle, traffic conditions, weather, visibility, and the surface and width of the highway.

(c) A driver of a motor vehicle shall not overtake or pass a bicycle proceeding in the same direction on a highway at a distance of less than three feet between any part of the motor vehicle and any part of the bicycle or its operator.

(d) If the driver of a motor vehicle is unable to comply with subdivision (c), due to traffic or roadway conditions, the driver shall slow to a speed that is reasonable and prudent, and may pass only when doing so would not endanger the safety of the operator of the bicycle, taking into account the size and speed of the motor vehicle and bicycle, traffic conditions, weather, visibility, and surface and width of the highway.

(e) (1) A violation of subdivision (b), (c), or (d) is an infraction punishable by a fine of thirty-five dollars (\$35).

(2) If a collision occurs between a motor vehicle and a bicycle causing bodily injury to the operator of the bicycle, and the driver of the motor vehicle is found to be in violation of subdivision (b), (c), or (d), a two-hundred-twenty-dollar (\$220) fine shall be imposed on that driver.

(f) This section shall become operative on September 16, 2014.