



Of the 45,000 plus people killed yearly in traffic accidents, approximately 10,000 were pedestrians. The death rate in pedestrian-car accidents is very high, as you might expect. Car-person collisions result in death or serious injury in almost every case.

One of the reasons for a large number of pedestrian accidents is that pedestrians are not required to get a license or meet an age requirement. The two groups that get involved in pedestrian accidents more than anyone else are the youngsters (up to age 14), and the senior citizens (over 65). They represent 39% of the total population and yet account for over half of pedestrian accident victims.

Young people usually have good eyesight, fast reflexes and agility, but these good qualities are counterbalanced by a lack of experience and good judgment. You can almost count on children to ignore the dangers of traffic. The only thing that keeps the tragic toll in check is the alertness of drivers.

Older pedestrians (over 65) are not blessed with the eyesight, reflexes and agility they once possessed and may be no more experienced than their young counterparts. That's right. The National Safety Council reports that most senior citizen pedestrian accident victims were never licensed to drive a car. As a result they have poor judgment when it comes to cars and traffic. This means that drivers have to be even more cautious in order to prevent accidents in spite of pedestrian blunders.

Poor judgment also enters into another group of pedestrian accident victims—intoxicated pedestrians. Recent studies of fatal pedestrian accidents in several states showed high blood alcohol concentrations in 69% of the victims. Since alcohol causes a reduction in inhibitions, physical coordination and mental alertness, it's no wonder that the drinking pedestrian has trouble avoiding accidents. Once more it falls squarely on the driver's shoulders to watch out for pedestrians who may be unable to watch out for themselves.



How far away is a pedestrian visible at night? If you're like most pedestrians, you guessed about twice as far as the distance from which pedestrians can actually be seen. In other words, pedestrians probably think that you, the driver, can see them at a distance of about 350 feet. In fact, you can't see them until you've cut the distance to about 175 feet. Pedestrians are the only roadway users who are not required by law to display a light or some other device to make themselves visible at night. It's up to drivers to be alert and drive within the clear illumination range of the headlights.

Yes, the pedestrian death toll is high. Don't contribute to it. Ask yourself if you have a proper attitude toward pedestrians. If you as a driver think that pedestrians should watch out for you instead of the other way around, you are part of the pedestrian accident problem. You, the driver, are the key to reducing pedestrian accidents—not the pedestrian.

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