According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administrations (NHTSA) National Survey on Distracted Driving, 86 percent of people feel unsafe when they see a distracted driver texting or reading emails.1 Even more vulnerable, and yet less discussed, are distracted pedestrians. A study published by Ohio State University found that the number of pedestrian emergency room visits for injuries related to cell phones tripled between 2004 and 2010.2 In 2012, more than 1,500 pedestrians nationwide were treated in emergency rooms because they were injured while walking and engaging in cell phone conversations.3 Nearly 129,000 pedestrians were treated for non-fatal crash-related injuries in 2015.4 Pedestrian deaths increased from 11 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2001 to 16 percent in 2016.5 While smartphone-induced distracted pedestrian behavior is not the sole factor contributing to pedestrian fatalities, it is an acute concern.

Smartphone use results in visual distraction, which can reduce pedestrian alertness to surroundings and shift focus from where it is needed: roadways, upcoming intersections, and crosswalks. Smartphone use has increased 236 percent from 2010 to 2016, and during that same time period, the number of pedestrian fatalities in the United States increased by almost 50 percent.6 Pedestrian deaths, as a proportion of all motor vehicle crash deaths, is the highest its been in 30 years.6

By the Numbers—NATIONWIDE

Adults ages 18 to 64 use smartphones while crossing the street.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk on the phone</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text or send email</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INCREASED PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES


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4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pedestrian Safety, Accessible at: https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/pedestrian_safety/index.html
Time to Live

Distractions while walking or driving can make a bad situation worse by increasing the amount of time it takes for an individual to react to a dangerous situation. Research indicates that mean reaction times increase from 0.99 seconds to 2.72 seconds if the individual is engaged in a complex text (defined as sending a text that is more than 10 characters long).⁸ If the person is distracted, their slowed reaction time may cause them to miss their window to take evasive action. Slower vehicle speeds and undivided attention to surroundings provide pedestrians and drivers a greater amount of time for both parties to actively avoid a collision. Only a few seconds could be the difference between a collision and no-collision, or a fatality and an injury.

Innovative Solutions

A variety of countermeasures that either address distraction or generally promote a safer walking environment can be deployed to reduce the risk of pedestrian crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities. Some noteworthy examples include:

**High-Visibility Enforcement.** Between 2009 and 2016, pedestrian deaths increased by 50 percent at non-intersection locations.⁹ A high-visibility enforcement campaign can be used to increase the awareness levels of pedestrians. Florida Department of Transportation used high-visibility enforcement and a branded campaign, “Alert Today Alive Tomorrow,” to increase awareness in the communities targeted by the campaign.¹⁰

**Pedestrian-Friendly Crossings.** Historically, intersections have been an especially vulnerable place where pedestrian fatalities occur in the highest numbers.¹¹ Therefore, making roadway crossings pedestrian friendly can help reduce pedestrian fatalities. Pedestrian refuge islands create a safe halfway point where pedestrians can pause before completing their crossing. In addition, raised crosswalks can be installed to encourage a reduction in the speed of oncoming traffic, making it safer for the pedestrian to cross.

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¹⁰ USF Center for Urban Transportation Research, Florida’s “Pedestrian & Bicycle Focused Initiative,” July 2018. Florida Department of Transportation. Accessible at: https://www.alerttodayflorida.com/

One way to reduce speed is to implement traffic calming measures such as a roadway configuration known as the Road Diet. Narrowing or decreasing the number of lanes reduces crashes and vehicle speeds and can provide designated space for pedestrians and bicyclists. Speed bumps, curb extensions, transverse striping, and other traffic calming measures can also be used to slow traffic.

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHB), also known as High-intensity Activated crossWalk (HAWK) Beacons. The installation of pedestrian activated HAWK beacons helps to protect pedestrians by providing warning lights for drivers and requiring the active participation and attention of the pedestrian.

Crosswalk Visibility Enhancements. Data shows that 75 percent of pedestrian deaths occur at night. Adding street lighting to pedestrian crossing areas can reduce pedestrian crashes by 57 percent.

Look up or pay up. To reduce the chances of pedestrians being injured while crossing a street and actively using a mobile electronic device, Honolulu has chosen to fine citizens. The violation costs are progressive and can result in up to a $99 penalty for the violator.

“Heads Up” Campaign. Delaware highway safety officials placed decals on the sidewalks of busy intersections. The decals prompted pedestrians to “look up” and were part of a walk smart campaign initiated to educate pedestrians about safe walking practices. Placing these decals on the ground put them in the line of sight for pedestrians looking down at their phones.

Connecticut’s Pedestrian Safety Efforts

The following are examples of the programs Connecticut is deploying to improve pedestrian safety:

1. Watch for Me CT. This is a comprehensive program aimed at reducing the number of injuries and fatalities as a result of traffic crashes involving non-motorized road users in Connecticut. It is funded by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and managed in partnership with Connecticut Children’s Injury Prevention Center. Learn more at www.watchformect.org.

Pitfalls: Connecticut is deploying to improve pedestrian safety:

- Watch for Me CT: A comprehensive program aimed at reducing traffic crashes involving non-motorized road users. Funded by Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) in partnership with Connecticut Children’s Injury Prevention Center. Learn more at www.watchformect.org

Sources:
2. **Pedestrian Safety Stakeholder Group.** CTDOT engages safety partners from agencies across the state to come together and brainstorm methods for improving pedestrian safety.

3. **Community Connectivity Program.** The first phase of this program offered Connecticut’s municipalities’ assistance to conduct Road Safety Audits (RSA’s) that examine safety issues and countermeasures to find ways to improve safety and reduce crashes at bike and pedestrian corridors and intersections. The RSA’s began in the spring of 2016, and a total of 80 RSA’s were completed over a period of twelve months. Learn more at [http://ctconnectivity.com/](http://ctconnectivity.com/).

4. **The Connecticut Technology Transfer Program.** The University of Connecticut is working to improve pedestrian safety by implementing educational workshops, instructional courses, and local agency aid. Efforts include:
   - **Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian (STEP),** administered through the Federal Highway Administration, educates transportation safety staff about innovative safety countermeasures that can enhance pedestrian safety. ([https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_4/step.cfm](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_4/step.cfm))
   - **Complete Streets** policies are designed to encourage safe access for all. ([http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?a=3531&q=531678](http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?a=3531&q=531678))

5. **The Pedestrian Signing and Pavement Marking Project.** CTDOT is making strides in improving crosswalk visibility on both state and locally owned and maintained roadways.