

Road Sleuth

Myths & Facts Revealed



These pedestrians are unaware of an approaching vehicle.

Myth: Pedestrians should walk in the same direction as traffic when sidewalks are not available.

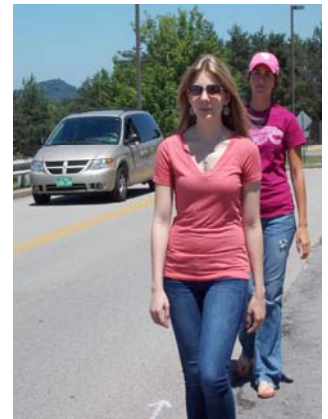
When sidewalks are not present, which is often the case on West Virginia's roads and streets, it is not unusual to see pedestrians walking along the edge of the road traveling the same direction as the traffic flow. The West Virginia State Code states, "where sidewalks are not provided any pedestrian walking along and upon a highway shall when practicable walk only on the left side of the roadway or its shoulder facing traffic which may approach from the opposite direction." It is also important to note that according to the West Virginia State Code "where sidewalks are provided it shall be unlawful for any pedestrian to walk along and upon a adjacent roadway."

Approximately 4,500 pedestrians are killed each year by motor vehicle crashes and about 8% of those killed were walking on the edge of a road. To avoid this safety risk, pedestrians should only travel along the edge of the road when there is no sidewalk or footpath adjacent to the roadway.

Walking against traffic allows pedestrians to see motorists and be more aware of potential hazards. Drivers are often distracted, and sometimes the best defense a pedestrian has to avoid getting hit is to move out of the way. If pedestrians are walking with their back to traffic, they will be less aware of approaching vehicles and the dangerous hazards posed by them.

Other tips for pedestrians walking in areas without sidewalks are:

1. Stay alert at all times.
2. Wear retro-reflective material to increase visibility. This is especially important during dusk and evening/nighttime. Motorists have a difficult time seeing pedestrians who are not wearing retro-reflective material at night.
3. Avoid using a cell phone or listening to music with earphones.
4. Walk as far away from the roadway as possible.
5. When possible, put natural or roadway barriers in between you and the cars.
6. When walking with another person stand one in front of the other, not side-by-side.



Here the pedestrians are more aware of their environment and are practicing key safety tips.

Following these simple safety guidelines can make your walking trip a great deal safer.