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Some Facts and Thoughts About CROSSWALKS AND SCHOOL ZONES

SCHOOL'S BACK- REMEMBER THE CROSSWALKS

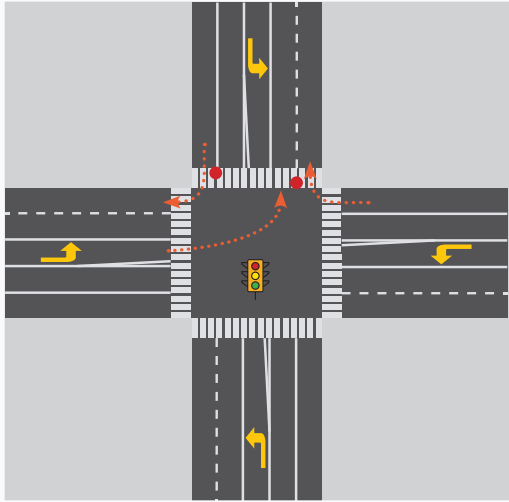
Crosswalks and school zone locations are not respected during the summer months when school is out. It's important to remind drivers that school is coming back in the next couple of weeks so that also means respecting the crosswalks and school zones again. When we are talking about school zones in Arizona, we are talking about 15MPH zones. These zones are very confusing to "snowbirds" that are here during the winter months. Even locals who live here year-around have confusion about when the zone starts and when it ends. Crossing guards are even confused about the Arizona laws that allow cars to turn through signalized crosswalks while they are in it. Everyone has confusion about "HAWK" signals that Arizona cities are installing. I will break it all down in this article.



15MPH SCHOOL ZONE CROSSWALKS

15mph school zone crosswalks that are set up with portable signs in the roadway are only employed in Arizona. No other state in the union uses this set up. Here are the basic's about 15 mph school zone crosswalks:

- A 15 mph school zone is the area between the approach line and the crosswalk itself.
- The paint markings for the approach lines and the crosswalk are installed in yellow.
- The approach lines are identified by **NO PASSING 15 MPH FINES DOUBLE SCHOOL IN SESSION** portable signs at the start of each approach and the **STOP WHEN CHILDREN IN CROSSWALK** portable sign at the crosswalk.
- The 15 mph school zone for each approach direction starts at the 15 mph sign and ends after the driver passes the crosswalk. Once a driver passes the crosswalk, they can resume the posted speed.
- If the roadway speed is 30 mph or less, the approach line for the zone is between 75 and 125 feet. If the roadway speed is 35 mph or above, the approach lines for the zone is between 125 and 300 feet.
- 15 mph school zone crosswalks can only be set up under operating agreements between jurisdictions and school districts. These agreements spell out hours of operation, whether or not crossing guards are required or optional, whether a zone is abutting or non-abutting and shows the map of where the zone is located. These agreements are used by schools to know when crossing guards should be at the crossing site and also offers guidance to police on times the zone should be enforced.
- 15 mph school zone crosswalks can only be installed under the following guidelines:
 - a. Only to be used at K-8 schools (Not high schools)
 - b. Not within 600 feet of a STOP sign, signal or other school zone crosswalk.
 - c. Not in conjunction with STOP signs or signals.



SIGNALIZED CROSSWALK LOCATIONS

In Arizona, A.R.S 28-792 allows motorist to turn right on a red if their half of the roadway is clear. This confuses a crossing guard if they are in the roadway and this happens while they are in the crosswalk. We would get this question every year from crossing guards during crossing guard training who work at signals. What schools can do to help crossing guards with this issue is to have a 2nd crossing guard posted at these locations. A 2nd crossing guard stops not only the right turns but also left turns through the crosswalk. See the example to the left.



WHAT ARE “HAWK” SIGNALS?

HAWK stands for “High-Intensity Activated CrossWalk”. It is a device to help pedestrians cross the street. It is essentially a signal for pedestrians. To activate it, the pedestrian will push the button to start the process. Before the button is pushed, drivers see the device heads as “black” or “off”. Once the button is activated, the signal head will turn to flashing yellow, then solid yellow, then solid red. Once the signal is solid red, the pedestrians will get a walk signal allowing them to cross the street. The solid red will change to flashing red as the countdown for pedestrians runs down. Here is where the confusion starts for drivers. Most drivers don’t understand they can proceed on the flashing red if their half of the roadway is clear. Most drivers don’t understand they can proceed on the flashing red, after stopping, if their half of the roadway is clear. They tend to wait until the flashing red turns back to black before they proceed. If all the drivers aren’t on the same page, it causes confusion and uneasy travel through the intersection.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The rise of collisions involving pedestrians makes the safe crossings more important than ever. Drivers and pedestrians alike need to understand and respect what it takes to be safe along the roadway if collision numbers are ever to decrease. School areas need special care. Arizona has been very effective with its 15 mph school zones around schools. The fact that this has been a law for over 70 years helps to get that respect from drivers and pedestrians. Police enforcement also plays a part in how well the speed limit in the school zone is followed. Police tend to have zero tolerance when handing out citations in school zones. They enforce not only the speeding issue, but the no passing issue as well. Signalized crosswalks are a different animal. Higher speeds and higher volume of traffic place undue burdens on pedestrians when they cross. Having a 2nd crossing guard should be required for signalized crossings where schools are involved. Crossing guards at these locations should have additional devices like lighted stop paddles to bring more attention to themselves and the pedestrians they cross.

