

Pedestrian Crossing Control Manual for British Columbia



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1.1 INTRODUCTION: PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Pedestrian crossing presents one of the greatest challenges for the traffic and safety engineering communities. The challenge is created by the two modes of travel that share the road. The issues associated with pedestrian crossing activities generally create considerable emotional concern within the community, especially when the community is reacting to an incident involving pedestrian injury.

Pedestrian crossing safety relies on the judgement exercised by pedestrians and drivers. To interact safely requires an exchange of information between the pedestrian and the motorist. Although traffic control devices can help to promote an exchange of information, educating pedestrians and drivers is paramount to providing for a safe operation.

Since pedestrians involved in traffic accidents are inevitably injured, safety must receive a high priority in analyzing pedestrian crossing issues. Crosswalk safety is usually evaluated using engineering factors, since no reliable method exists to forecast pedestrian accident trends and accident rates are usually very low. Pedestrian accident history is generally categorized by age but seldom does it consider all variables such as level of use by population or age group.

The school-age group experiences, on a proportional basis, a higher accident rate. Because of this it has received additional attention in the form of specific signs and legislation governing school pedestrian activities. Concern has also been focused on the group aged 65 and over, due mainly to the general reduction in their crossing skills.

As with other forms of traffic control, the uniform application of traffic control devices for pedestrian crossings promotes the orderly and predictable movement of traffic. When traffic is operating in an orderly and predictable manner, the probability of accidents occurring decreases significantly.

Since there is no practical means of communicating with pedestrians, information about traffic flow is generally directed at drivers. Hence, information is directed primarily at the individual with the lower risk of injury. Ideally, information should be communicated to the individual who is at higher risk of injury during a crossing situation - the pedestrian.

As pedestrian control issues are often emotionally charged, there can be a tendency to assume that using more traffic control devices will resolve pedestrian safety problems. However, experience has shown that the overuse of devices may reduce their effectiveness and establish practice by precedent as compared with technically demonstrated improvements of pedestrian crossing conditions.

Traffic control devices should be selected and implemented to ensure that the most troublesome locations receive attention commensurate with the problem.

Pedestrian traffic control issues must be continually monitored to ensure that devices remain effective and that available funds derive the best value.



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1.2 INTRODUCTION: PEDESTRIAN CROSSING CONTROL MANUAL

The Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada (MUTCD) presents the devices and their application for pedestrian crossings with the objective of providing standards that will promote uniformity.

This Pedestrian Crossing Control Manual for British Columbia is primarily intended to augment the MUTCD for Canada by serving an interpretive function and by linking the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada standards and warrants with the activities related to complying with these national uniform standards. It offers guidelines and warrants for implementing the standards and applications contained in the MUTCD.

This manual involves guidelines for side mounted, overhead, special crosswalk, pedestrian signals and pedestrian overpasses. The use of signing, marking and signals appropriate for this hierarchical system of pedestrian control has been established. Warrants were developed for the use of pedestrian crosswalks, special crosswalks and pedestrian signals. The manual also incorporates general information on the use of school programs involving safest routing, guards and the training of guards.

Throughout these guidelines, the words “shall”, “should” and “may” are used to describe specific conditions related to crosswalk installations. The following definitions apply to these words in these guidelines:

Shall: A mandatory condition.

Should: An advisory condition. Where the word “should” is used it is considered to be advisable usage, strongly recommended but not mandatory.

May: A permissive condition. An option that is not mandatory.

This manual also provides information related to the fundamental concepts of traffic control, traffic control devices and current application practices. The materials used to develop this manual reflect the experience of provincial and municipal agencies.

This manual summarizes the developments as reported in recent research and by technical representatives in the industry.

Although intended for use by various levels of design, traffic and maintenance engineering personnel, the manual may also prove of value to consulting engineers, educators, students and others.

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1.3 DISCLAIMER

The purpose of the Pedestrian Crossing Control Manual for British Columbia is to provide operational guidelines for the use of devices for the control of traffic and provision of information to vehicle drivers. The contents have no Legislative authority and are not intended to be interpreted as minimum standards by which road authorities are to be judged. Similarly, this manual is not intended to be used as a basis for establishing civil liability.

While the manual was prepared with a view to promoting uniformity, the recommendations do not take into consideration the specific local factors of particular situations. Accordingly, variations in standards and their application will continue to exist, as will the distinction between ideal and actual conditions.



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