



## Street Department

901 N. Nelson  
Spokane, WA 99202

Informational Handouts

# How do “Pedestrian” Signals Work?



A pedestrian signal allows a safer way for pedestrians to cross the street at signalized intersections. The pedestrian signal, when activated, provides time for the pedestrian to enter the street on the steady “Walk” and to finish crossing the street on the flashing “Don’t Walk” signal. The pedestrian signal is normally activated by a pedestrian detector push-button, that causes the controller to operate a pre-programmed timed sequence of steady “WALK” and flashing “Don’t Walk” signals.

Pedestrian signal indications consist of “Walk” and “Don’t Walk” signals or international symbols displaying a person walking for “Walk” and a hand for “Don’t Walk”. The “Walk” or person walking symbol is displayed in white and the “Don’t Walk” or hand symbol is displayed in Portland orange.

## Walk Indication

The pedestrian signal sequence begins when the “Walk” signal is illuminated. This sequence is normally 4 to 7 seconds long and allows enough time to leave the curb and begin crossing the street in the direction of the “Walk” indication before the pedestrian clearance interval begins. At some locations where there are many pedestrians crossing, a longer “Walk” interval may be used.

In order to get the “Walk” signal, **you must press the pedestrian push button.**

## Flashing Don’t Walk

The pedestrian clearance interval consists of a flashing “Don’t Walk” signal. During this interval pedestrians should complete their crossing, however, they should not begin crossing on the flashing “Don’t Walk” signal. The clearance interval is based on the street width divided by 4 feet per second walking time. If there are a large percentage of elderly pedestrians using the crossing, the walking speed may be reduced to 3.5 feet per second. The distance to cross the street is normally measured from the curb on the near side to the center of the last vehicular travel lane on the far side of the street.

## Steady Don’t Walk

The “Don’t Walk” signal, steady illumination, means that a pedestrian should not enter or cross the street in the direction of the pedestrian signal.



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### Caution

Even when crossing an intersection with the “Walk” signal, pedestrians should watch out for potential conflicts with vehicles. Drivers may be making right or left turns across the crosswalk and may not see the pedestrian in the crosswalk. Behavioral studies on drivers shows that nearly 40 percent either do not see or do not yield to pedestrians crossing a street.

### Pedestrian Signal Design



Pedestrian signals are normally mounted at least seven feet but less than ten feet above the sidewalk. The pedestrian signal is in line of the pedestrians’ vision and the marked crosswalk. The pedestrian push-button detector is usually found on the pole under the pedestrian signal head. A sign can be mounted above the pedestrian detector explaining its purpose and the positioning of the push button will tell which crosswalk signal is activated by which push-button.

If you have any questions about Pedestrian Signals, please contact the City of Spokane, Traffic Operations Division at (509) 232-8800.