EVERYONE IS A PEDESTRIAN

WALKING SAFELY IN RURAL AREAS — NOT JUST A "WALK IN THE COUNTRY"

Most of us would probably say it is most important to be careful while walking in the busy intersections found downtown in big cities, or in the increasingly traffic-snarled suburban business districts or "town centers" in new planned communities.

But rural areas can require special care, even for a simple walk for exercise or to take in the fresh air and enjoy the wide open spaces. Rural areas don't have the high traffic volumes found in metropolitan areas, but often the vehicles that are on rural roads are traveling at much higher speeds than pedestrians are used to. In addition, rural areas tend to have fewer roads, so what traffic there is — both vehicles and pedestrians — will be concentrated on them.

The number of pedestrians killed in rural areas vary by state. These deaths are tragic, yet often preventable, if motorists and pedestrians know the special conditions faced by walkers in rural situations.

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Publication No. FHWA-SA-01-003
HSA-1/3-01 (10M)E

A PAVED SHOULDER OR A SMOOTH TURF SHOULDER IS A GOOD PLACE TO WALK IN RURAL AREAS

With fewer pedestrians found walking along rural roadways, motorists will not necessarily be expecting to encounter someone walking on or near the side of the road. Remember to walk facing oncoming traffic, so that both pedestrian and motorist can "look in each other's eyes." If there is a smooth, stable surface available alongside the road, that's a good place to walk. If roadside safety hardware (such as a guardrail) is present, look to see if there's a smooth flat surface behind the barrier for you to walk. If you need to walk on a paved shoulder, stay as far to the right as is possible and keep your eyes open for oncoming traffic. Remember that if the sun is at your back (at dusk or dawn), drivers may not see you because of the bright sunlight when the sun is low in the sky.

REMEMBER TO BE CERTAIN THAT MOTORISTS CAN SEE YOU!

Even during daylight hours, it's good to plan ahead, and wear brightly colored clothing that will contrast with the surrounding scenery. For walking during low-light hours of dusk or dawn, many manufacturers of sportswear are now adding retroreflective materials to their jackets or walking shoes. These surfaces really "light up" when headlights shine on them, and this will help motorists to notice and recognize pedestrians. In fact, retroreflective materials can be seen about three times further than just the color white. Another good idea for improved night-time visibility would be to wear a retroreflective vest like those worn by highway work zone flaggers and construction workers. Another helpful item for low-light walking is a flashlight — do not point the flashlight directly at vehicles. It can make you more visible to motorists as well as help you avoid uneven or slippery surfaces that could cause a fall.

WHEN WALKING ALONG RURAL ROADS, BE CERTAIN TO PLAN AHEAD AND WATCH OUT FOR OBSTACLES LIKE BRIDGES AND NARROW SHOULDERS!

A bridge carrying the roadway over a stream or other obstacle may result in a narrowing of the roadway shoulders. The approaches to the bridge will likely have guardrails, which may decrease the available walking space even more. Plan ahead before you get to the narrowed area, select a safe walking path that will keep you out of the travel lane as much as is possible, and be extra careful to watch for approaching traffic.

Be sure to always watch for approaching traffic and select a safe walking surface as far from the travel lane as possible!

Remember these and other crossing rules — review these tips with others.

View our website at http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/ped_bike.htm