

## **Study: Larger Vehicles More Likely to Strike, Kill Pedestrians**

In October 2019, a teenager driving a sport utility vehicle (SUV) made a left turn at a tree-lined intersection in Norfolk, Virginia and [struck a 59-year-old woman](#) in a crosswalk. The woman died a few days later without regaining consciousness.

A recent [study](#) by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety concluded what this story illustrated: Larger vehicles such as SUVs, pickup trucks and minivans pose a particular danger to pedestrians.

The institute looked at federal data on the most common types of single-vehicle, single-pedestrian crashes at or near intersections and at other locations for the years 2014 through 2018. It also examined pedestrian crash data from North Carolina for the years 2010 through 2018. Among the findings:

- One out of every seven fatal pedestrian crashes at U.S. intersections involved a large vehicle making a turn.
- An SUV making a left turn at an intersection (versus one going straight) was twice as likely to kill a pedestrian as was a car. Vans and minivans were three times as likely to do so, and pickups were four times as likely.
- SUVs were 51% more likely to kill a pedestrian walking or running on the side of the road than were cars (versus head-on crashes with pedestrians). Pickups were 25% more likely.
- The results were similar in North Carolina, where turning crashes with pedestrians accounted for 38% of crashes at or near intersections.

The study's authors speculated that driver visibility in these vehicles may be a cause. It quoted a staff transportation engineer as saying, "It's possible that the size, shape or location of the A-pillars that support the roof on either side of the windshield could make it harder for drivers of these larger vehicles to see crossing pedestrians when they are turning."

However, the authors cautioned that more research would be needed to understand the role of visibility in these crashes.

The engineer suggested that improved vehicle design, better road infrastructure and reduced speed could lower the number of pedestrian crashes and fatalities.

Pedestrians can protect themselves by:

- Wearing bright clothing or reflectors when walking or running in darkness;
- Walking on sidewalks when they are available;
- Walking or running toward traffic in areas that do not have sidewalks;
- Waiting for signals at intersections and paying attention to drivers entering or exiting driveways and parking spaces; and

- Avoiding distractions such as looking at cell phones while crossing streets.

### **What drivers can do**

Some steps drivers can take to avoid crashes are:

- Being constantly vigilant for the presence of pedestrians;
- Slowing down and being prepared to stop when turning or entering a crosswalk;
- Yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks and stopping well back from the crosswalk to enable other drivers to see pedestrians;
- Reducing speed; and
- Using extra caution when visibility is poorer than normal.

Regardless of the type of vehicle you use, you should always drive at appropriate speeds when pedestrians are present, particularly at intersections and while making turns. If you have a large truck or SUV, you will need to be extra vigilant.

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