

Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency
PEDESTRIAN SAFETY OBSERVATION STUDY 2010
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

BACKGROUND

In 2007, the city of Watsonville had the 4th highest rate of pedestrian injuries/fatalities compared to 106 other cities in California with a similar population size.¹ Nearly one in eight traffic fatalities in Santa Cruz County in 2007-2008 were pedestrians,² and in 2009 more than one quarter of pedestrian injuries/fatalities occurred in the city of Watsonville.³

As a part of the ongoing efforts with the South County Bike and Pedestrian Work Group (SCBPWG) of the Community Traffic Safety Coalition (CTSC), the second annual Pedestrian Safety Observation study was conducted in the fall of 2010. The purpose of this study is to track key pedestrian and motorist behaviors that contribute to increased risk of pedestrian injury/fatality. Because of the SCBPWG focus on Watsonville and surrounding areas, 62% of the observation sites were in South County.

METHODS

This is the second year that this observation was implemented. To collect the data, each observer was provided with an instruction sheet, a form on which to record their observations, a location to observe, and a time during which to conduct the observation.

Between August 23rd and September 27th, 2010, nine observers collected data at 13 sites, five in North/Mid County and eight in South County. One site is new to the results this year, due to the data from last year's observation being invalid. The following factors were observed:

- ♦ Age—Categories recorded, based on the observer's best assessment, were Child (0-12 years), Teen (13-18), Young Adult (19-24), Adult (25-64), and Senior (65+ years).
- ♦ Pedestrian Used Due Care when Entering Roadway—The California Vehicle Code requires pedestrians to exercise due care when crossing the street, and to ensure adequate space to allow approaching traffic to stop safely. Examples of unsafe pedestrian behavior include:
 - Failing to look left, right, and behind for oncoming traffic before crossing.
 - Entering roadway aggressively or failing to indicate a desire to cross the street (i.e., eye contact, waving, etc).
- ♦ Pedestrian Waited for Traffic Signal—It is safest for pedestrians to enter a crosswalk when the "Walk" signal is displayed. If the "Don't Walk" signal is blinking or solid, it is safest to wait.
- ♦ Motorist Yielded to Waiting Pedestrian—The Vehicle Code requires motorists to exercise due care to protect the safety of pedestrians. Examples of unsafe motorist behavior include:
 - A motorist fails to yield to a pedestrian waiting to cross.
 - A motorist turns right on a green light without yielding to a pedestrian.

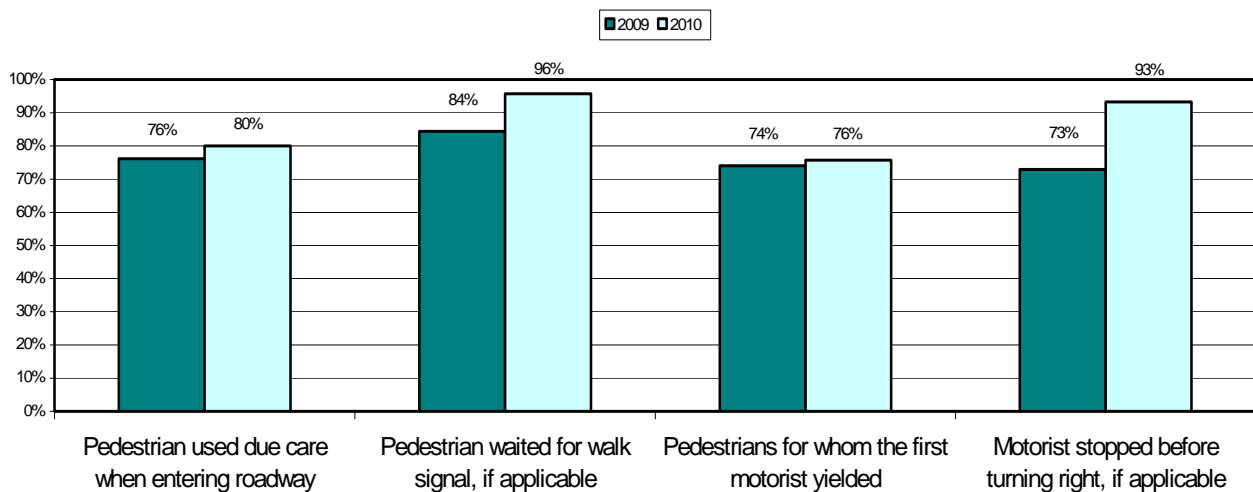
- ♦ Motorist Stopped before Turning Right at a Stop Sign or Red Light—The Vehicle Code requires motorists to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks. The Vehicle Code does not allow motorists to stop in a crosswalk.

NOTABLE RESULTS

A total of 2217 pedestrians were observed in 2010. Countywide key findings include:

- ♦ Study-wide, observed behaviors of pedestrians and motorists were safer in 2010 than 2009.
- ♦ 96% of pedestrians waited for the walk signal before entering the roadway versus 84% in 2009.
- ♦ Fewer than 1 in 10 motorists failed to stop before turning right, as compared to 3 in 10 in 2009.
- ♦ 80% of pedestrians used “due care” when entering the roadway vs. 76% 2009. Young adults tended to use less care than other age groups.
- ♦ As was the case last year, 1 in 4 pedestrians who indicated a desire to cross had to wait for one or more motorists countywide before having the opportunity to cross safely.

Observed Safety Behavior in Santa Cruz County



CONCLUSION

The changes observed from 2009 to 2010 are positive. However, due to the limitations of the study (volunteer observers, different observers at each site from one year to the next, etc.), trends over a greater length of time will be more informative and reliable. Overall, the results continue to indicate a need for education directed toward both motorists and pedestrians.

¹ California Office of Traffic Safety. http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media_and_Research/Rankings/default.asp
² *Dangerous by Design: Solving the Epidemic of Preventable Pedestrian Deaths (and Making Great Neighborhoods)*. Transportation for America and the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership. 2009. http://t4america.org/docs/dangerousbydesign/dangerous_by_design.pdf
³ SWITRS data. <http://iswitrs.chp.ca.gov/Reports/jsp/CollisionReports.jsp>