

Talking Points

Journalists often try to answer the questions, "Who, What, Where, When, How, and Why." These talking points are organized as such to help you better respond to journalists' questions.

The following are some general talking points that can help to focus your discussion of pedestrian safety issues when interacting with the media. Feel free to adapt these points to reflect the agenda and priorities of your community and/or organization.

What: Defining the problem

- San Francisco has some of the highest rates of pedestrian injuries per resident in the nation.
- In San Francisco, pedestrians make up **half of all traffic fatalities**. In comparison, pedestrians are only 12% of motor-vehicle fatalities nationwide.
- **Almost 1 million vehicles drive into or through San Francisco everyday**. This is a large number for a geographical area of only 49 square miles.
- There is safety in numbers. **The more people walking in an area, the less individual risk of being hit by a vehicle.**

Who: Vulnerable populations

- Seniors and children are more vulnerable as pedestrians. **Seniors** are 9 times as likely to be killed than other age groups. **Children** are more likely to be injured near schools.
- **African-American** pedestrians are more than twice as likely to be injured than any other ethnic group.

Where & When: Impacted locations

- **The Civic Center, the Tenderloin, South of Market** and the **Financial District** are the areas with the highest numbers of pedestrian injuries and fatalities.
- Pedestrian deaths occur most often on **arterial streets** and **near freeway ramps**.

How: Risk factors

- **Speeding** is a high risk factor for pedestrian injuries. A pedestrian hit by a driver speeding is twice as likely to die than to sustain a minor injury.
- **DUI collisions** were nearly 3 times more likely to result in a fatal injury to a pedestrian.
- **Alcohol-related** pedestrian injuries are more likely to occur on streets with a **high concentration of bars, liquor stores and mini-marts**.

Why: Pedestrian safety is important

Pedestrian safety is connected to other health and quality of life issues:

- A **sedentary lifestyle** is the number two killer of Americans. Walking has been called the "perfect exercise," because it increases cardiovascular health and general fitness in people of all ages, and requires little investment in equipment.
- However, people are **walking less** now in comparison to 20 to 30 years ago.

- Walking 30 to 60 minutes per day is the most recommended exercise to **prevent chronic disease**, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.
- Especially for **seniors**, walking can lower the risk of chronic disease, improve immune response, and decrease depression and anxiety.
- **Violent crime** is less likely to occur in communities where local residents feel they can walk about safely, thereby providing more “eyes on the street.”
- Walking provides a way to **feel more connected** to your community and surroundings.
- Encouraging more walking and less driving can cut down on local pollution levels, thus helping to alleviate **asthma**, one of the nation’s worst threats to children’s health.
- Walking **feels good**, and can provide a **stress-relieving** method to commute to and from work.
- Regular walking helps to relieve symptoms of **depression**, a condition that has reached epidemic proportions in the U.S.

How to make San Francisco safer for pedestrians:

The most effective, long-term solution is to create a safer **environment** for pedestrians.

Pedestrian safety professionals refer to the **Three “E”s of Prevention**: Engineering, Education, and Enforcement:

- **Engineering**: Traffic calming methods such as speed humps, ladder crosswalks, traffic signal improvements, and countdown crossing signals are examples of improvements to the built environment that can prevent pedestrian injuries. Longer crossing times will make the streets safer for seniors.
- **Education**: Organizing local communities to advocate for improved conditions can make neighborhoods more pedestrian-friendly. Raising the awareness of drivers and pedestrians through educational and media campaigns can educate individuals in safe practices.
- **Enforcement**: Residents can campaign for more enforcement of laws impacting pedestrian safety, such as those against drunk driving, speeding, and red light running.

Prevention Tips

- Advocate for an **environment** that is safe for pedestrians and drivers.
- **Be Alert**. Whether driving or walking, don’t assume that others see you.

Pedestrians:

- Use a marked crosswalk if available. Obey signs and signals.
- Look left, right, and left again when crossing. Keep looking as you cross.
- Never allow children under age 10 to cross streets alone.
- In low visibility conditions, wear light-colored clothing or items incorporating retro-reflective materials.

Drivers:

- Obey all traffic laws, including stopping at red lights and driving at or below the speed limit, and safely for local road and weather conditions.
- Yield to pedestrians crossing the street as required by the California Motor Vehicle Code. Do not pass a car that is stopped for pedestrians.
- Don’t drink or use drugs and drive.
- Always yield to pedestrians when entering or leaving a driveway, or otherwise crossing a sidewalk.

Bottom Line: Safe Streets are a Shared Responsibility!