Parachute
PREVENTING INJURIES. SAVING LIVES.

Parachute unites the former organizations of Safe Communities Canada, Safe Kids Canada, SMARTRISK, and ThinkFirst Canada into one leader in injury prevention.

What's Speed Got To Do With It?

Pace Car Community Fact Sheet

Driver Speed

Children are more likely to be struck by a car in areas with higher speed limits[1]. In fact, there is a direct correlation between an increase in vehicle speeds and the increase of the risk of injury. A pedestrian struck by a car traveling at 50 km/hr is eight times more likely to be killed than a pedestrian struck at 30 km/hr and even small reductions in speed can be significant. For each 1.6 km/hr reduction in average speed, collision frequency is reduced by five percent. Reducing vehicle speed has been proven to be effective in preventing crashes and reducing the severity of injuries[2]. At a speed of 30 km/hr, vehicles and pedestrians are able to co-exist with relative safety, which means that drivers have sufficient time to stop for pedestrians, and pedestrians can make better crossing decisions.

Changing Attitudes and Behaviours

Pedestrian safety is each driver's responsibility. Children's physical and mental capacities are still developing well into their teens and they are often unable to make safe judgments about pedestrian safety. Drivers must be prepared for children to act like children.

Unfortunately, speeding is common in Canada. According to the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, about 2.7 million Canadians admit to habitually driving well over the speed limit; 2 million admit to frequently accelerating to get through a traffic light and about 670,000 say hey take risks while driving, just for the fun of it[3]. And it is significant that drivers are unable to accurately assess their own speed while they are driving and, as a consequence, make few adjustments in the presence of children[4].

Mechanisms that alert speeding drivers can be very useful and according to Transport Canada, 72 percent of Canadian drivers endorse roadside warning signs to tell them when they are speeding[5]. In addition, a combination of speed cameras and fines can enforce speed limits in residential areas and school zones. One study illustrate that when these strategies are in place, the number of vehicles traveling more than 10 km/hr over the speed limit actually dropped by 70 percent[6]. Speed limit reductions in countries such as South Africa, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States, have demonstrated that when a speed limit was reduced, there was a decline in road crashes ranging from eight to 40 percent[7].

Changing Environments- Traffic calming

Environmental or physical characteristics can either encourage or discourage speeding and can greatly influence the frequency and severity of pedestrian-related crashes. A Danish study found that traffic calming reduced pedestrian injuries by as much as 60 percent[8]. Traditional traffic calming approaches include introducing speed bumps, road narrowing, or adding pedestrian islands or curb extensions (bulb-outs).

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