



# Preventing Crashes At Signal-Controlled Intersections

According to statistics from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), more than 20% of all fatalities on our Nation's roadways are attributed to intersection-related crashes. In 2008, that number totaled 7,772 deaths and over 10% of these fatalities were caused by drivers running red lights. With crossing movements by drivers and pedestrians adding to the problem, an intersection is one of the most complex traffic situations that motorists, including professional drivers, encounter.

## Stale Green Presents Red Flags

Even going straight through an intersection with a green light can be risky. For instance, consider a traffic light in the distance that is green. Has the light been green for some time? If so, the light is "stale green," meaning the green traffic light cycle could be nearing its end and the light may change momentarily. This is not a signal to speed up to beat the lights. Rather, you should begin to slow down and cover your brake. If the intersection has pedestrian signals, use them to help you determine whether or not the light will soon be turning red. If the "Don't Walk" signal is flashing, slow down and prepare to stop. If the "Don't Walk" signal is steady, the light could be about to change. With stale green, you will have to decide on a point at which you will no longer be able to stop safely. Slamming on your brakes or speeding through the intersection to avoid stopping short are accidents waiting to happen.

## Yellow Means Slow Down and Stop

Too many drivers consider the yellow (amber) light as a last chance to get through an intersection rather than acknowledging it as a caution signal. This is especially dangerous when you are already in an intersection to make a left hand turn and the oncoming traffic is speeding up to beat the light.

## Stop At Red, Coming and Going

When approaching a signal-controlled intersection and the light is red, move your foot off the accelerator, brake smoothly and evenly and maintain your lane position. Come to a full stop and leave enough space between you and the vehicle stopped ahead of you so that you can steer around it if it were to become disabled. If you are the first vehicle at the light, stop at the painted stop line, before crosswalks or, if neither are present, at the intersection itself without entering the crossing traffic lane. When the light turns green, scan the intersection before you move forward. With delayed green, some drivers believe they are entitled to those few extra seconds and speed up rather than slow down. Lastly, remember that "Right on Red" is restricted in some areas. When it is allowed, you must first come to a complete stop to check for traffic and pedestrians before turning. Turning right on red is optional and drivers ahead of you may elect not to do so, waiting instead for the green light.

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