



Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired

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Leaders Across Wisconsin and the U.S. Proclaim October 15 “White Cane Safety Day”

Annual Observance Highlights Safety of All Pedestrians

White Cane Laws requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians who are blind or visually impaired have been around since the 1930s. Unfortunately, many motorists still fail to obey them nearly a century later.

To raise awareness of these laws and promote pedestrian safety, advocates, allies and community leaders each year recognize October 15 as White Cane Safety Day. This month, Governor Evers and mayors across Wisconsin are issuing proclamations recognizing the occasion and highlighting the importance of knowing and observing White Cane Laws.

“We’re grateful to these leaders for helping spread the message that keeping pedestrians safe, especially those who are most vulnerable in traffic, is everybody’s responsibility,” said Denise Jess, executive director of the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired.

White Cane Safety Day was created in 1964 by Congressional resolution and a proclamation signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, with the goal of educating the American public about the right of way of pedestrians who are visually impaired and using a white cane or guide dog.

Every state has a White Cane Law on the books, though the details vary from state to state. Wisconsin’s statute says:

An operator of a vehicle shall stop the vehicle before approaching closer than 10 feet to a pedestrian who is carrying a cane or walking stick which is white in color or white trimmed with red and which is held in an extended or raised position or who is using a service animal...and shall take such precautions as may be necessary to avoid accident or injury to the pedestrian.

Jess notes that White Cane Laws don’t just protect people with low vision. Measures requiring drivers to be more attentive make all pedestrians safer.

“Many people need a little more time to cross the street—elders, parents walking with young children, maybe even somebody who sprained their ankle playing soccer—and all of them benefit from drivers following the White Cane Law, not just those of us who are using a white cane or service dog,” Jess said.

“Stopping your car 10 feet from the crosswalk is a great idea for everyone. And by knowing the law, you can help save lives.”

To date, the State of Wisconsin and these municipalities have issued or plan to issue White Cane Safety Day proclamations this year:

Brookfield
Green Bay
Janesville
Kaukauna
La Crosse
Madison
Menasha
Menomonee Falls
Mequon
Middleton
Milwaukee
Oak Creek
Stevens Point
Sun Prairie
Watertown
Wausau

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