



Pedestrian countdown signals

Definition

Pedestrian countdown signals consist of a standard pedestrian signal head, with an added display showing a countdown of the remaining crossing time.

The countdown timer may start either at the beginning of the pedestrian WALK phase, but the MUTCD recommends starting the timer at the onset of the flashing DON'T WALK. The former is feasible only in jurisdictions that do not use “rest in walk” mode and/or that have all fixed-time signals.

Countdown signals are required by the MUTCD to be installed whenever pedestrian signal heads are warranted as part of intersection signalization or reconstruction. Signals may be supplemented with audible or other messages to make crossing information accessible for all pedestrians. Note that accessible pedestrian signals are called for at all new signals and at “all altered portions of existing facilities... the maximum extent feasible” in the proposed PROWAG.

Objective

To provide information to pedestrians about the amount of time remaining to safely cross the street at signalized intersections.

Advantage

Easily understood by most people.

Helps pedestrians judge whether there is sufficient time to cross. Provides certainty as regards the duration of the flashing DON'T WALK phase.

Especially helpful to mobility-challenged, elderly pedestrians, and adults accompanying small children.

Challenge

May not be easily understood by children or other persons with limited counting ability.

Does not benefit vision-impaired pedestrians.

Countdown signal technology will not currently work for railroad-preempted traffic signals (i.e. at signalized crossings near rail lines).

Resources

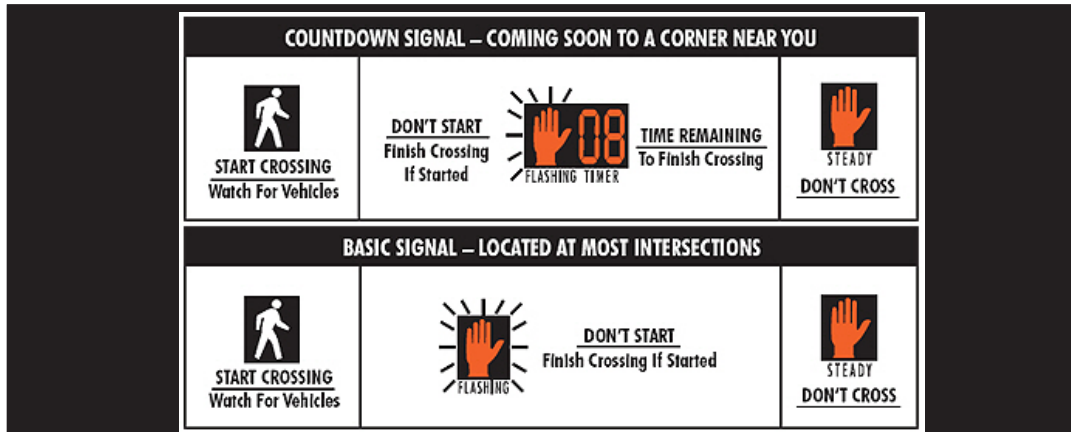
Pedestrian Safety: Report to Congress (August 2008)
http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/legis_guide/rpts_cnsgs/pedrpt_o8o8/pedrept_o8o8.pdf (See pp. 12-13).

PedSafe Case Studies: Countdown signals
http://www.walkinginfo.org/pedsafe/case_studies2.cfm?op=C&subop=f&CM_NUM=38.

Pedestrian Countdown Indication—Market Research and Evaluation
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/trafficeng/signals/news/ped%2ocountdown.pdf>.

Accessible Pedestrian Signals: A Guide to Best Practices
<http://www.apsguide.org/index.cfm>.

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
<http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/> (See Chapter 4E).



Images (clockwise from main image):

Pedestrian countdown signal.
 Source: Flickr, NYC Department of Transportation.

Additional examples:
 Sources: Dan Burden; Dan Burden; Tara Maclsaac, The Epoch Times; Paul Krueger, Flickr; Delaware Department of Transportation.