

Kentucky's White Cane Law

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Like most states in the U.S., Kentucky has a White Cane Law. Kentucky Statute 189.575 came into effect on July 15, 2002 and was included in the updated KY Driver's Manual on June 8, 2020. Kentucky's White Cane Law states:

The operator of a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way to any blind pedestrian carrying a clearly visible white cane or accompanied by an assistance dog.

Failure to yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian who is blind is a violation that could result in a maximum fine of two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250).

Note that the law stipulates that the white cane must be *clearly visible* to others; it cannot be folded up and tucked away in a backpack, for instance. Drivers must be able to see the white cane so they can react quickly and appropriately. By *assistance dog* the statute is referring to a guide dog.

What is meant by a *white cane*? Would a long branch painted white be considered a white cane? No. A genuine white cane is one designed specifically for a person with low vision or no vision. A white cane would include a folding or rigid standard white cane, a white I.D. cane, or a white support cane. The white and red colors on the cane are important. The white reflective tape on most white canes reflects light that strikes it and makes the white cane highly visible. This is an important safety feature for the person using the white cane. The white cane is also a readily recognizable symbol as a tool for people who are blind, enabling drivers and others to act responsibly and not endanger the pedestrian who is blind or visually impaired.

In addition to the White Cane Law, the Kentucky Driver's Manual includes helpful tips for drivers when they encounter pedestrians who are blind. A few of those tips are mentioned below. To see more tips, go to "Pedestrian/Crosswalks" on page 14 of the online KY Driver's Manual. <https://driving-tests.org/kentucky/ky-dmv-drivers-handbook-manual>

- A pedestrian who is blind uses the sound of your vehicle's engine as a guide, so drive up to the stop line near the crosswalk to allow the person to hear you. Note: Drivers of electric and hybrid vehicles must be especially alert to pedestrians who are blind since they may not be aware of your presence due to how quiet those vehicles are.
- Do not yell out directions while sitting in your vehicle or shout "Hey, it's safe to cross, go ahead." It is distracting and could put the pedestrian who is blind in danger. The person who is visually impaired is listening to all available traffic sounds to cross a street independently. If you see a pedestrian who is blind step

back from the curb and hold their white cane close to their body, this signals they are waiting to cross and you, the driver, may proceed.

- Avoid stopping in the middle of a crosswalk. This compels the pedestrian who is blind to walk around your car and might force them into oncoming traffic.
- Do not honk your horn at a pedestrian who is blind and using a white cane or a guide dog. Most likely they will not know who you are honking at, and the noise may startle them.

For questions or comments, please feel free to contact the certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists who work for the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Blind Services Division. Safe travels!