

Driver Safety

Left Turns

In the choice between left and right turns, turning left provides you more room to maneuver and allows you to see to the side you are turning toward, and yet it's statistically proven that left turns result in more accidents and more serious accidents. These accident statistics are true not only for the average driver, but for the school bus industry overall.

Turning left creates more hazards to your vehicle and its passengers. You put your vehicle in the line of oncoming traffic as well as possibly traffic coming from the right and left. Left turns require any driver to process more information and that information is often more complex than when making a simpler right hand turn. Adding to these issues are smaller cars and motorcycles, which are often harder to see. The point of all this is that making left turns should be planned out of your bus routes when possible. This is especially true for any uncontrolled intersections.

United Parcel Service has implemented the reduction of left turns into their daily delivery routes and found not only a reduction in accidents but even savings in mileage and fuel. Today's global positioning systems, Internet-based mapping and Web sites can allow you to develop right turn only routes that will minimize risk, prevent accidents, and possibly save money in fuel and mileage.

Since you probably can't eliminate all left turns, try and limit them to intersections that are controlled with traffic lights. Regardless of the controls, there are some steps you can take to minimize the risks noted above. First, give left turns your full attention. This is one of those "extra care" times that require you to be in control of your vehicle. Slow down to the appropriate speed and where necessary prepare to stop by covering the brake. You should signal at least 100 feet ahead of your turn. If stopped, stay far enough behind any vehicle in front of you so that you can see their rear tires. While waiting to turn, keep your wheels straight in case you are hit from behind or your foot slips off the brake. In most



states, you are required to stay out of the intersection before turning. You may need to be patient in waiting for oncoming traffic to clear. Look carefully for traffic from all points, left, right and oncoming traffic. Don't forget what is behind you also.

Your vehicle should be positioned left of center in the lane closest to the direction in which you are turning. Once you are certain of a clear path, you should proceed with caution, using your windows and mirrors to keep your eyes on your surroundings. Don't forget your blind spots. If you arrive at an intersection that is not controlled by traffic lights at the same time as another vehicle at adjacent corners, the car on the left normally yields to the car on the right. In cases where vehicles are arriving continuously from various points, normal procedure is to proceed in order of your arrival.

Pedestrians ALWAYS have the right of way, even if they are jaywalking. Be aware of smaller vehicles and motorcycles that are now more prevalent. Be careful of signals from other drivers to proceed. The well intentioned person may not be able to detect all unsafe conditions. You still need to look for yourself. Also, be aware of the possible undetected signals you may be trying to send. If your vehicle is blocked by a similar size or larger vehicle(s), other drivers may not see your signals. If you believe other drivers are not getting your signal, you may need to take additional actions such as sounding your horn. So, where possible, plan not to make left turns, but if you have to make them, do so with the safety tips above in mind.