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## Keeping older New Yorkers safe on sidewalks



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By [Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez](#), Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging / [edavenport@schnepsmedia.com](mailto:edavenport@schnepsmedia.com) / Thursday, December 19, 2019 / 2:45 PM

With an increasing number of people on New York City sidewalks and streets, all New Yorkers must keep in mind the importance of pedestrian safety for frail or slow-paced older adults.

Older New Yorkers walk more than older adults in any other city in the United States, despite crowded streets. For someone with balance or mobility issues, an accidental bump from a rushing passerby could cause a life-threatening fall.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among older Americans. What's more, experiencing a fall as an older adult is both physically and emotionally painful. To avoid this, older pedestrians are cautious. They walk in the crosswalk and use crossing signals, but if struck by a vehicle, they are more likely to be injured. The Department of Transportation's (DOT) Safe Streets program is an initiative focused on the safety of older pedestrians. In 2018, older adults ages 65 and older accounted for 13 percent of the City's total population, but 50 percent of pedestrian traffic fatalities.

Accidents from motor vehicles are the largest concern. As we work to reduce these traffic fatalities, we must not forget the importance of cyclists observing the rules of the road to keep vulnerable pedestrians safe. Nearly eight hundred thousand New Yorkers ride a bicycle regularly, and this number is increasing. Bikes are a healthy and environmentally friendly solution to the city's crowded transportation system, but without safety considerations and enforcements, they can be dangerous.

Not yielding to a pedestrian might save a few seconds on a bike commute, but it could also cause a severe injury. Cyclists must utilize the City's designated bike paths or lanes and leave the sidewalks open to pedestrians. New York City has 1,240 lane miles of bike routes. In the last five years, the City has expanded on-street bike lanes by more than 330 miles, with 66.1 miles installed in 2018.

The City is doing its part to keep pedestrians safe. Alongside DOT, the New York Police Department (NYPD) makes sure cyclists abide by the rules of the road. This year, the NYPD has issued 37,916 moving violations to cyclists, compared to 34,257 in 2018, an 11 percent increase.

I am confident that there is enough room for cyclists and pedestrians alike. As we strive to be a truly age-inclusive City that accommodates dwellers of all ages and with disabilities, I encourage all New Yorkers to look out for their neighbors on the sidewalk.



*Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez is commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging. Prior to joining the de Blasio administration, she served in executive leadership roles with AARP, EmblemHealth and other organizations. She also served as New York's first Latina Secretary of State.*

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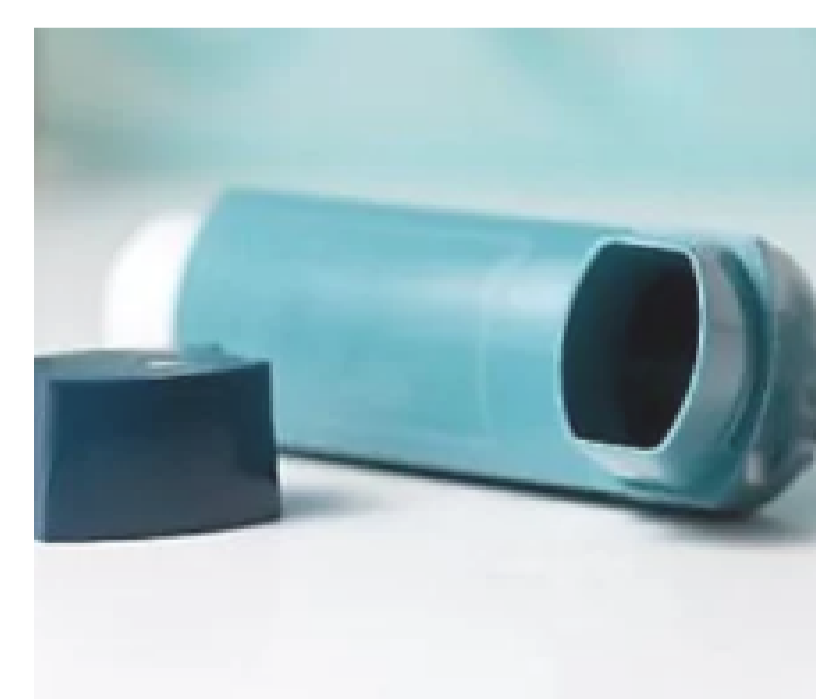
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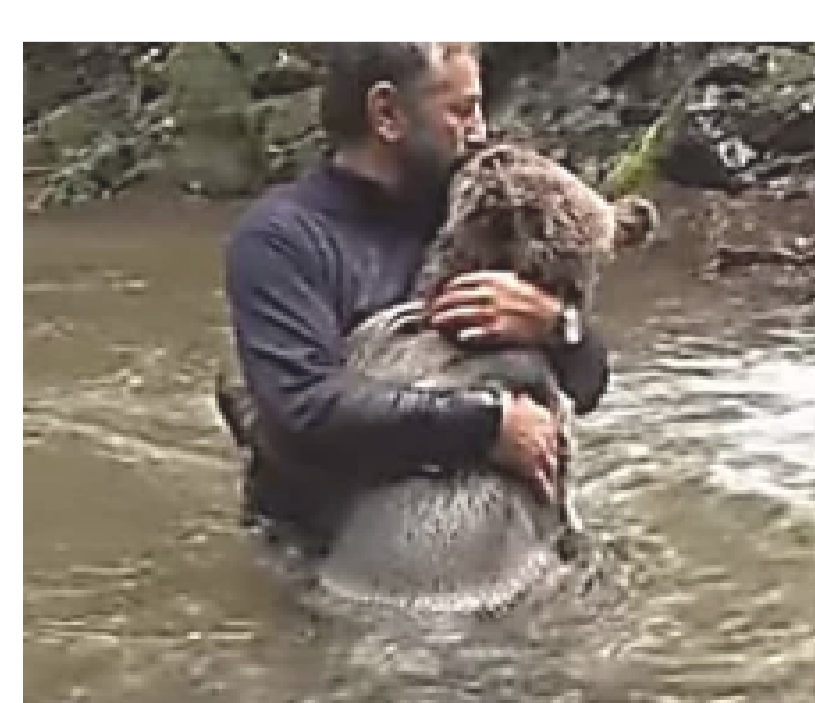
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