
Exercising Extreme Caution With Left Hand Turns

By: Lenin Fierro

Left hand turns are among the greatest safety risks and challenges for fleet operators and pedestrians. In our CRASH fleet tracking, collisions involving left hand turns are the fourth most common incident, after rear-end collisions, right angle turns, and sideswipes. Left hand turn collisions are among the most likely to lead to fatality, serious injury, and major vehicle damage as we have already learned again early 2019.

In August 2016, the Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) [released a Citywide study](#) of left hand turns called "Don't Cut Corners." It found that pedestrians and bicyclists are killed or severely injured by left-turning vehicles at over three times the rate (19%) than right-turning vehicles (6%). In 80% of the cases, these crashes involve passenger vehicles and 20% involve trucks. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 53% of traffic-crossing collisions occur with left-hand turns, compared to only 5.7% involving right turns.

Why are left turn collisions dangerous? Drivers tend to make left turns at a higher rate of speed due to turning radius and longer distances to make the turn than for right hand turns. According to the DOT study, crash reconstruction analysis shows left turns occur at an average of 9.3 MPH versus 5.6 MPH for right turns. This leaves pedestrians potentially more exposed while in a crosswalk.

In addition, drivers must monitor oncoming traffic and vehicles, adding to the challenge of these turns. In addition to increased safety risks, these left turns increase idling, traffic congestion, and time spent in traffic.

As part of Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero initiative, DOT is implementing left turn calming strategies, including left turn restrictions, left turn signals, and expanding pedestrian intervals (LPIs).

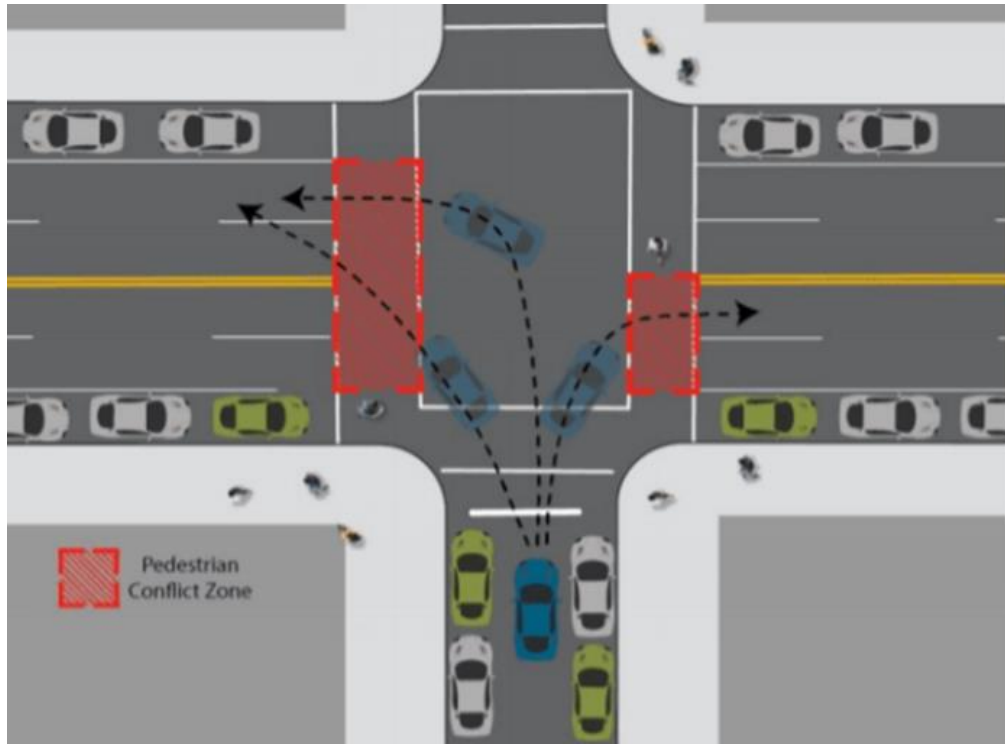
The most critical action must still be taken by drivers. First, avoid left hand turns if you can.

Wherever possible, develop your route without left hand turns.

You will likely get to your destination faster and more safely. Since 2004, UPS has eliminated most left hand turns in routes and reports reductions in fuel use and crashes.

If you must take a left hand turn, go slowly, never rush, keep a close eye out for pedestrians and bicyclists, and ask any passengers to do the same.

Recognize the risk of left hand turns and help prevent crashes from happening.



Check out past editions of the Fleet Newsletter

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 250, January 18, 2019](#): NYC Fleet: Drive to 2,000 Electric Vehicles

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 249, January 11, 2019](#): Fleet Spotlight: Donald Cooke, Welder, DOT

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 248, January 4, 2019](#): It's a City Fleet Vehicle. It Is Not Your Car.

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 247, December 27, 2018](#): 2018: The Year in Fleet

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 246, December 20, 2018](#): NYC Fleet Spotlight: Anthony Dell'Era, Quality Assurance, DCAS

Check out the [complete archive](#).

Check out past editions of the Fleet Newsletter

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 250, January 18, 2019](#): NYC Fleet: Drive to 2,000 Electric Vehicles

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 249, January 11, 2019](#): Fleet Spotlight: Donald Cooke, Welder, DOT

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 248, January 4, 2019](#): It's a City Fleet Vehicle. It Is Not Your Car.

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 247, December 27, 2018](#): 2018: The Year in Fleet

[NYC Fleet Newsletter 246, December 20, 2018](#): NYC Fleet Spotlight: Anthony Dell'Era, Quality Assurance, DCAS

Check out the [complete archive](#).

// CONNECT WITH DCAS TO FOLLOW NYC FLEET //

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

Visit us on the web at [nyc.gov/DCAS](https://www.nyc.gov/DCAS)