

HAWK Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon FAQ's

What is a HAWK Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon? The HAWK (High-Intensity Activated CrossWALK) Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon is a device which assists pedestrians and cyclists to safely cross busy streets.

How is it different than other crosswalks? While it looks fairly similar to a traditional signalized pedestrian crossing, the HAWK functions a bit differently. When not in use, it remains dark. The beacon goes through a sequence of five movements after a pedestrian pushes the button. Once activated by a pedestrian, the HAWK Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon begins flashing yellow to indicate to drivers someone will be using the crosswalk. It then goes to solid yellow like a typical traffic signal, advising drivers to stop if safe to do so. The beacon then turns solid red, requiring drivers to stop at the stop line. Finally, the beacon goes to flashing red, letting drivers know that after coming to a complete stop, they can proceed with caution if the way is clear- the same movement they would make at any other flashing red signal or beacon. The beacon then returns to a dark state.

How long have they around and where are they being used? They were invented and first used in Tucson, Arizona in the late 1990s to facilitate easier and safer pedestrian crossings of wide thoroughfares with high traffic volumes. Since then, their use has expanded to numerous U.S. cities. Lawrence, Merriam, Dodge City and Topeka are a few cities in Kansas that use the HAWK Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon.

In terms of safety, how does it compare to other crosswalks? Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon's have been shown to significantly reduce pedestrian crashes. A Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) study published in 2010 found that pedestrian hybrid beacons can reduce pedestrian crashes by 69 percent and total crashes by 29 percent. Because they remain dark until activated, they can help increase driver attention to pedestrians crossing the roadway, and can reduce rear-end collisions. The pedestrian hybrid beacon's red signal indication removes any judgment from the motorists and requires a complete stop. The crosswalk provides a clear message that motorists must stop and allow pedestrians to cross the street. Motorist compliance with the requirement to yield has been shown to exceed 90 percent at pedestrian hybrid beacons. In addition, fewer rear-end collisions occur at pedestrian hybrid beacons.

Will this signal have any impact on traffic? Once pedestrians have finished crossing the street, vehicles may proceed during the alternating flashing red period. This factor can reduce motorist delays by up to 50 percent.

Where can I learn more about HAWK Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons?

Feel free to contact us, or visit the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration website at www.fhwa.dot.gov