

Please Come to Celebrate

## **International White Cane Day**

Celebrate the independence of white canes and raise public awareness of the White Cane Law!



**October 14, 2011**

**State House, Boston MA  
10-Noon-Grand Staircase**

Show Your Independence!

White Cane & Guide Dog Users Bring Family, Friends, Orientation & Mobility Specialists, Vision Professionals and Others to raise White Cane Awareness!

For more information on this Celebration contact the Orientation and Mobility Department at the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind  
617-626-7581 or 800-392-6450x 7581

**Massachusetts White Cane Law: General Law Chapter 90 Section 14A  
Yield to White Cane and Dog Guide Users at Street Crossings-It's the LAW!**

## OCTOBER IS WHITE CANE AWARENESS MONTH

The white cane is a symbol of independence for Individuals with blindness. The white cane allows a legally blind Individual to travel independently. In 1931, the Lions Club began promoting the use of white canes as a national identification program.

International **White Cane Day is October 15**. All states and many other counties have White Cane laws, which allow pedestrians, who are legally blind, the right of way at street crossings. Most people who are legally blind have some usable vision.

When in doubt, ask if the person needs assistance.  
Do not grab the person, cane or dog guide!  
Do not pet a dog guide.

**Massachusetts White Cane Law states that** All motorists, when they see a pedestrian who uses a dog guide or white cane at a street crossing, **must come to a complete stop**.



White Cane recommendations are based on a number of factors, including the type of visual impairment, age, height and other specific needs as accessed by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS).

The two main types of white canes used by Individuals who are legally blind are:

A LONG WHITE CANE with red at the bottom. This cane type is for independent travel and to avoid obstacles. It is also used for identification, the detection of objects and drop-offs, and information gathering. There is also a variety of different types of cane tips.

And/or a WHITE SUPPORT CANE with red at the bottom, which is designed to identify the individual as legally blind but has usable travel vision. It is used to assist with depth perception on stairs or curbs in familiar areas. It does not offer protection against the unexpected obstacles.

Specialized training for both types of canes and travel skills are provided by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS).

These canes may be rigid or collapsible. They are used to help navigate the area ahead of the user. The long cane allows a person who is blind or visually impaired to check for objects in the path of travel and changes in the walkway surface.

A small percentage of persons who are legally blind use a dog guide rather than a long cane but usually need long cane and orientation & mobility training before acceptance to a dog guide school.

Legal Blindness does not mean total blindness. Most persons who are legally blind have some usable vision. Some may be able to still read (regular or large print), recognized faces and colors (or not), depending on the type of vision impairment and degree of vision loss. Vision may also change throughout the day depending on the time of day, health of person, lighting of area, etc.

White Cane Awareness Month is to promote better understanding of what a white cane means & how pedestrians and motorist can assist long cane users and dog guide users at street crossings.

For more information on White Cane Awareness Month or for white cane training, contact the Orientation & Mobility Department at the Mass. Commission for the Blind, 800-392-6450(V/TTY) x7581.

Top Ten List of **DON'Ts**  
For Motorists When They See a Pedestrian  
Using a White Cane or Dog Guide at Street Crossings.

(Adapted from "*The Ten List of What Motorists Shouldn't Do When They See A Blind Person*" by James Hazard & Kathy Zelaya info@oandm.org 1998)

10. **Don't** stop your car more than five feet from the crosswalk line.
9. **Don't** yell out "it's ok to cross".
8. **Don't** get impatient when waiting for pedestrian who is visually impaired to cross. If the pedestrian places the long cane into the street, it usually indicates he or she will begin a street crossing. If the cane traveler takes a step back & pulls back the cane from the curb, it usually indicates the person will not be crossing at that time.
7. **Don't** consider a 'rolling' stop as a complete stop. A stop sign means STOP!
6. **Don't** turn right on red without coming to a full stop and looking for pedestrians. The Right on Red Law requires drivers to come to a complete stop prior to making right turn.
5. **Don't** fail to stop for pedestrians at all crosswalks whether or not there is a traffic signal or stop sign. Come to a full stop.
4. **Don't** stop your car in the middle of the crosswalk.
3. **Don't** pass another car, stopped, waiting for pedestrians cross the street.
2. **Don't** wave to pedestrians who are using a white cane or dog guide to indicate that you are waiting for them to cross.  
They CAN NOT see you.
1. **Don't** honk!

**Massachusetts White Cane Law:** All motorists, when they see a pedestrian who uses a dog guide or a white cane at a street crossing, **must come to a complete stop.**

## MASSACHUSETTS WHITE CANE LAW

All motorists, when they see a pedestrian who uses a dog guide or a white cane at a street crossing, **must come to a complete stop.**

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 90 Section 14A: Protection of blind pedestrians crossing or attempting to cross ways

Whenever a totally or partially blind pedestrian, guided by a guide dog or carrying in a raised or extended position a cane or walking stick which is white in color or white tipped with red, crosses or attempts to cross a way, the driver of every vehicle approaching the place where such pedestrian is crossing or attempting to cross shall bring his vehicle to a full stop, and before proceeding shall take such precautions as may be necessary to avoid injuring such pedestrian. A person who owns an animal shall restrain and control such animal on a leash when in proximity to a guide dog that is on a public or private way. Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to deprive any totally or partially blind person, not carrying such a cane or walking stick or not being guided by a dog, of the rights and privileges conferred by law upon pedestrians crossing ways, nor shall the failure of such blind person to carry a cane or walking stick or to be guided by a guide dog while on the ways of this commonwealth be held to constitute or be evidence of contributory negligence. Whoever violates any provision of this section shall be punished by a fine of no less than one hundred nor more than five hundred dollars.



# October Is White Cane Awareness Month



**Yield To White Cane  
And  
Dog Guide Users  
At  
Street Crossings  
*It's the LAW!***

Massachusetts White Cane Law: General Law Chapter 90 Section 14A  
For more information, contact the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind  
617-727-5550/V or 800-392-6450/V-6556/TTY [www.mass.gov.ma.us/mcb](http://www.mass.gov.ma.us/mcb)