

When winter hits, safety slips

How snow and ice make travel more dangerous for drivers and pedestrians

Amela Moore
Staff Writer

Walking can be good for exercise, sleep, bone strength, a clear thinking process and cardiovascular health, and walking outside can be beneficial until the temperature drops and the snow approaches, leaving many cold and uncomfortable during their walk. In the cold months, people are also more likely to get hit by cars, get into car accidents and suffer other injuries.

These days traffic lights can start to go dim and sometimes become covered in frost, leaving drivers to treat the intersection as a four-way stop. Tires start sliding, making it more difficult to steer accurately. While people are in a hurry to get to where they need to go such as school, work, appointments, etc., this only increases the risks of accidents. This is why drivers should increase their distance following behind cars and avoid driving in difficult conditions as much as they can so the roads aren't crowded.

As snow and ice makes itself known, the daily routine becomes more difficult for both pedestrians and drivers, and more hazardous.

According to injuryfacts.nsc, over the last five years weather-related deaths increased 20% and injuries rose 120%, while weather events themselves increased 11%. In 2023, 75,104 weather events caused 877 deaths and 3,857 injuries. Snow can be a major driving distraction for many as they have to swerve unexpectedly if they can't see, may slide through an intersection, or have difficulty avoiding pedestrians walking in the street.

Pedestrians are even more at risk because sometimes the snow causes poor visibility and drivers may not be able to

stop in time because the roads are slick. This is why everyone must be even more cautious when driving because the risks of accidents increase. This time of year when you're driving, you're not just driving for yourself but also for everyone else around you to have a smooth transition.

"Just yesterday I was on my bus, on my way home from school and I was on my phone when all of a sudden my head hit the seat in front of me really hard and everything started yelling. Then when I looked up I saw the bus hit the car in front of us really hard and the bus driver was in shock," junior Damarvion Hattix said.

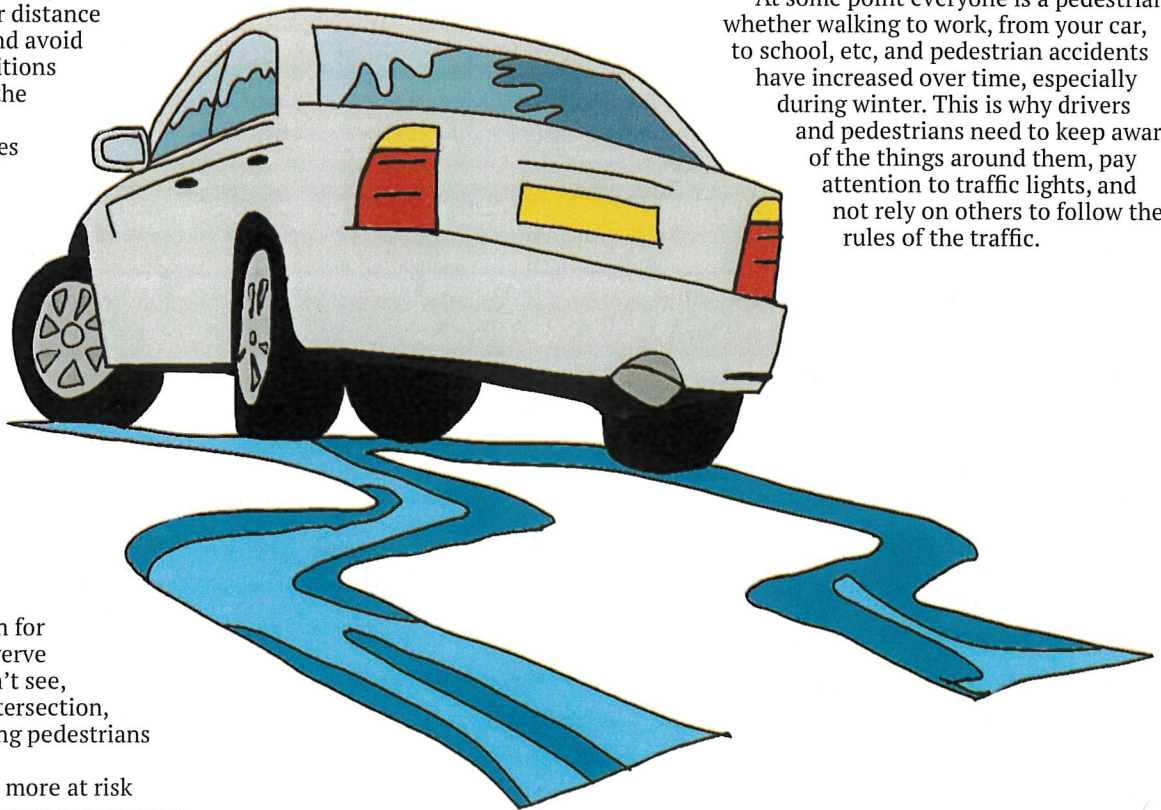
Keeping a good amount of following distance from the car in front of you can be very beneficial. It gives you room to avoid anything that could possibly happen, like de-

layed braking or even sudden stops. This can help avoid any error that may occur because you were thinking ahead.

Pedestrians should wear reflective clothing to increase visibility, stay alert to surroundings and stick to clear walkways and intersections. When crossing the street, try to make eye contact with drivers, give a signal so they know you are crossing and wait for a clear path. Pedestrians cannot expect everyone to drive safely, so it's best to be alert at all times to avoid potential danger. The risks are real.

"When I was driving I came to a stop at a red light and when I looked in my rearview mirror I saw a pickup truck graze against the back of my car and it slid to the front of my car and it just kept sliding all the way down the street because of the ice," Math IMC receptionist Mrs. Shelly said.

At some point everyone is a pedestrian, whether walking to work, from your car, to school, etc, and pedestrian accidents have increased over time, especially during winter. This is why drivers and pedestrians need to keep aware of the things around them, pay attention to traffic lights, and not rely on others to follow the rules of the traffic.



Building on Tradition, Shaping the Future

Westside's new cafeteria design connects modern needs with a legacy of pride and progress

Amela Moore-Hollimon

Staff Writer

Starting Dec. 15, Westside High School will be adding on new dining space and remodeling the cafeteria, leaving room for more students to sit and eat.

During this time, students will still get their food from the courtyard like usual, but instead of eating there, they will walk with their trays into the activity gym and find a

seat in the temporary seating. This will allow for construction to be done properly in the courtyard, so workers can make it a bigger and better place with more visual appeal. The space is scheduled to open at the beginning of next school year.

The school is on the older side, built almost 75 years ago. Because of this, it has had a lot of recent remodeling to enhance the student experience. All of the bathrooms have been renovated, providing more modern and cleaner restrooms for staff and students on campus. Attention has now shifted to the cafeteria.

"Our goal is to have a diversity of seating. Not just standard cafeteria tables but adding things like high tops, different types of seating, and different types of grouping, to give a lot of flexibility and choice for students and how they want to eat lunch and who they want to eat lunch with, allowing circulation, flow and obviously getting lunch," Matt Wegner, of BVH Architecture said.

The goal is to make the cafeteria more comfortable and organized. The courtyard will be expanded, so a lot of students can be in there at once without it feeling





(Artist Rendering)

Exterior view of Cafeteria Renovation

crowded.

“We obviously want to maintain a lot of good day lighting control and views to the outside. We maintain that two story volume on that exterior wall, diversity of seating, places for banners, TVs along the columns, new ceiling and new lights. The existing wall with the windows to the classroom will be new acoustic panels,” Wegner said.

This scenery will create a relaxing environment that allows students to watch television and be more lively for everyone’s well being. This shows the dedication of the workers and the administration, such as principal Jay Dostal, to provide what the school needs to continue to grow and improve.

“The current capacity is 358 and the new capacity is 550,” Dostal said. “This was a team decision between school leadership

and our construction partners. The decision to start in December was made because it would allow us to have the cafeteria reopened for the start of the next school year. We are not aware of any problems, but rather, we are trying to manage the logistics of having a major construction project going on at school while students are in session and still being able to provide meals to everyone.

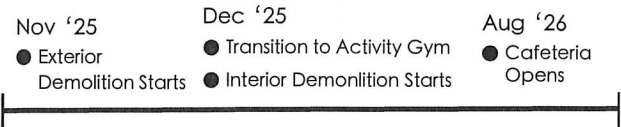
This project will provide students and staff with a more inviting, efficient and spacious area for years to come. The project will add a major detail to the school, enhancing the look and feel of the building as a whole.

“We are excited to be announcing the remodeled cafeteria and courtyard will be open in August of 2026,” Dostal said.

Design Goals for Cafeteria

- Seating Expansion to 550
- Diversity of Seating
- Circulation/Flow
- HS Campus ‘Town Square’

WEITZ PROJECT TIMELINE



Cafeteria Interior Renovation

(Artist Renderings)

Warriors speak out about Cafeteria Expansion



Xakyra Curtis

Senior

“As a senior, I am infuriated I won’t be able to experience the

new cafeteria.”



Joseph Mckay

Teacher

“From a teacher perspective it will help a lot with manage-

ment, and for students it will be good to have more space.”



Darien Jenkins

Sophomore

“I am excited to experience the new cafeteria for the rest of

my high school years.”

The Loud Sound of Silence

With phones dominating student life, Nebraska schools fight to restore conversation and connection

Amela Moore-Hollimon
Staff Writer

Before the bell rings, as students walk into Westside High School, there are many not socializing, interacting or communicating with each other because they are distracted by a phone. Heads are down, hoodies up and eyes are glued to the device, as the loud sound of silence fills the halls. There is little communication or verbal interaction. Critics say many students don't even have a social battery anymore because they are so invested in social media and tied into their phone.

The scene that takes place at Westside before school can be found all across America and this year the Nebraska state legislature took notice. What happens with their devices before school is up to students to decide. But when school starts, cell phone use not only can be restricted inside the school buildings in Nebraska, but it's a requirement.

According to the new Nebraska law, cell phones must be restricted in schools during class time (Nebraska Legislative Bill 140). The law states that "schools shall prohibit the use of an electronic communication device by students while on school property or attending a school instructional function".

This law has drawn more attention to the rates of phone usage in schools, which have steadily

gone up. It's easy for students to glance at a notification then get lost, missing the lesson the teacher is teaching. The hope of the legislation is that this will be a way to keep students focused and on task, or to stop students from being tempted to use them.

Most people, including students, can relate to the idea of getting lost in their phone unintentionally.

"Last week my mom asked me to pick up the toys my little brother dumped out all over the floor in the living room. So I grabbed my phone to play music while I cleaned and that's when I heard my phone ding," junior Selena Sabino said. "I checked my phone to look at the notification and next thing you know I'm sitting on the couch and I'm still on my phone almost an hour later because I got carried away and so deep in my phone and I hadn't picked up a single toy."

Before this new law many schools already had students limit their time on their devices, including not using them at all during class. In 2024 Westside adopted a rule called "Bell to Bell No Cell." This policy encourages students to pay more attention to their work and be involved in activities during class by having their full attention on their assignments.

Keeping devices out of reach allows

students to be more dedicated in their work and focus more on the lesson.

In Nebraska, the Department of Education strongly agrees that devices have been a distraction, so they have applied a similar rule to the state in the form of a state law. This is to keep students from being tempted to get on their phone when they could be working and using their time more wisely. The legislature even put the option of school consequences into the law to give schools the power to enforce. Students know that additional enforcement at Westside is possible.

"Bell to bell no cell is important to make sure everyone is on task and gets their work done but sometimes a lot of students are still on their phones so I wonder are they going to take a step further and have students put their phones in pouches for the whole school day, in the future, if this issue doesn't get fixed," junior Khloee Bullok said.

Students hope that if they fix the issue of excessive phone usage, then maybe putting phones in pouches all day won't be considered.

"Being at school without a phone can be boring when it's not class time and I know there's some schools who make students lock their phone up all day until the bell rings and I wouldn't want to lock my phone up in a pouch all day, in case of an emergency," junior Kilan Davis said.

There are many things that keep teenagers distracted but cell phone use and social media is one of most prominent. The fact that the legislature has enacted a law that impacts all students across the state is a large response to fight this perceived problem.

Studies have also shown that phone use and social media have negatively affected people's identity, social interaction and mental health, and that staring at a screen all day can affect your vision and your posture. It could be that students will gain more than better attention through these efforts.

Time will tell what benefits might be seen from the new law.

