

How to Be Seen

Jim Fenton

It is a dark and stormy night. After a long day at the office, you're about to arrive home. Driving down your street, you spot a faint shadow in the darkness. You slow and see that you have narrowly missed your neighbor, who is out walking their dog.

Many of the things that make Los Altos special -- narrow residential streets with muted street lighting and few sidewalks, and our fondness for pets -- create an unusually dangerous situation for pedestrians, especially at this time of year when the days are short. When it's time to take the dog for a walk or get some fresh air, many of us grab the nearest jacket and a flashlight, and become virtually invisible in the night.

Rainy days and dusk or sunrise aren't much better. It's easy to blend into the background and not be seen by cars under those conditions as well.

Reflectorized clothing isn't just for highway workers and cycling enthusiasts; it's a precaution that all Los Altans should take when going out in the darkness and gloom. With bright, reflectorized clothing, you are much more visible than you are with a flashlight alone.

It's easy to find reflectorized clothing in most sporting goods and outdoor stores. While the color (bright orange, for example) might not be your favorite, it's highly preferable to not being seen at all.

Help make Los Altos safer for all by dressing to be seen when out walking. Avoiding an unfortunate accident is a benefit to both you and the drivers you may encounter.

Jim Fenton is a member of the Los Altos Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission. These opinions are his and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Commission or the City of Los Altos.