

Distracted Walkers: Not Just A Problem For The Empire

By *Nicholas Staropoli* — December 16, 2015

In that galaxy far, far away even the youngest Wookiee is familiar with the following scenario: You are out for a winter's stroll in your All Terrain-Armored Transport (AT-AT) walker, and all of a sudden your phone buzzes with an alert from Twitter: 12 pictures that show how Darth Vader and Emperor Palpatine are the best friends in the galaxy! You *can't not* read it. Everyone will be talking about it at the Cantina later. So you reach for your phone, put your AT-AT in autopilot, and start thumbing.

But while you're distracted, a bunch of pesky members of the Rebel Alliance come through the area and somehow, using only cables (a technology that was not even revolutionary in the time of the Egyptians let alone a futuristic, ancient galaxy), wrap up your AT-AT's legs ... and *forced* down you are.



In our galaxy, since we don't all have our own AT-AT ([thanks, Obama](#) [2]) and, in New York City at least, "[hoverboards](#) [3]" are now illegal, we are forced to go for a winter stroll using our own two feet like the French or other primitive cultures.

Yet distracted walking has still become a huge problem, the primary difference probably being that our equivalent alert is more along the lines of "12 pictures that show Donald Trump and Jeb Bush are really the best friends in the galaxy."

Distracted walking caused by people whose faces are buried in their smart phones has become more and more of a health risk. While millennials (ages 18-35) are more likely to be involved in a distracted walking incident, *elderly women* are most likely the ones to be seriously injured when it happens, according to a 2013 study in [Accident Analysis & Prevention](#) [4].

Data, which came from US Consumer Product Safety Commission, showed that from 2004 to 2010 emergency room visits for injuries sustained during distracted walking doubled. These injuries included shattered pelvises, and head, neck and back injuries. The [National Safety Council](#)

estimated that between 2000 and 2011, over 11,000 injuries occurred due to walkers distracted by their cell phones. Sure, happening on the planet Hoth would be one thing, but even familiar environs are not safe: a little more than half of all distracted walking injuries occur while at home.

Yet many Americans don't see distracted walking as a real problem. A [survey](#) [6] of 6,000 people in *American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons* found that while 74 percent of Americans think *other people* engage in distracted walking and it's a problem, only 29 percent say identified themselves as a distractible walker. Only 46 percent thought distracted walking was a problem for themselves.

Since none of us have Jedi mindfulness, nor do we have the panacea healing powers of that [recovery tank Luke enters](#) [7] in "The Empire Strikes Back" to heal our wounds, I suggest we all try and focus a little more on the path in front of us and a little less on the Ewok click-bait.

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[1] <http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/vvfbc.gif>

[2] <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/response/isnt-petition-response-youre-looking>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2015/12/hoverboards-unsafe-at-any-height/>

[4] <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/00014575>

[5] <http://www.nsc.org/Connect/NSCNewsReleases/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?List=1f2e4535-5dc3-45d6-b190-9b49c7229931&ID=15&Web=36d1832e-7bc3-4029-98a1-317c5cd5c625>

[6] <http://newsroom.aaos.org/media-resources/news/distracted-walking-a-serious-issue-for-you-not-me.htm>

[7] http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/Bacta_tank