

# Bicycle Safety

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American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the Snell Memorial Foundation, and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) are organizations that set performance standards. Manufacturers mark their helmets with the logo of one of the foregoing organizations to signify they meet those safety standards. The ANSI is the least severe of those three. Helmets without a logo should not be used.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Wear an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or Snell Memorial Foundation approved bicycle helmet.
- Dress for the weather. In cold weather, it's better to wear several layers of clothing than one bulky item. To be more visible, wear bright or light colors, and at night, wear reflective clothing.
- Use clips or rubber bands to keep long pants out of the chain.
- Wear comfortable, lightweight low cut shoes with firm soles to protect your feet.
- Check for proper air pressure and tire tread.
- Adjust the seat and handlebars to fit and tighten loose parts.
- Clean and oil moving parts, keeping oil off rubber.
- Check the brakes. They should allow you to make a quick, smooth stop.
- Obey all traffic signals, signs and pavement markings.
- Ride on the right side of the road, close to the edge. If in a group, ride single file at least one bike length apart. Infants under the age of one year should not be carried as bicycle passengers.
- Avoid potholes, bumps, ice, oil slicks, loose gravel, sand, and sewer grates.

- Watch for parked cars with people in them someone could open a door unexpectedly. Constantly look for cars pulling out into traffic.
- Do not carry passengers on a one-person bicycle. Keep packages in a luggage carrier so both hands can be on the handlebars.
- Be alert. Give pedestrians and vehicles the right of way.
- At night, ensure you have a working headlight visible for 500 feet, a red rear reflector and side reflectors.
- Stop before entering a roadway from a sidewalk or driveway.
- Ride only on authorized streets or highways. Select streets with low traffic usage whenever possible. Use bicycle paths where available.

## **After Dark**

To help reduce nighttime bicyclist fatalities, cyclists should always wear a good helmet, use front and rear lights and reflectors, and wear reflective clothing. Children should never ride at night, and cyclists should avoid riding on unlighted, narrow roadways.

The number of bicyclists killed at night has increased from 304 to 372 per year. In 1975, the number of nighttime deaths accounted for 30% of the total number of bicyclists killed. By 1982 (the latest year for which complete data are available), nighttime deaths accounted for 42% of the total number of bicyclists killed. One factor contributing to fatal nighttime bicyclist accidents is that the bicycles and riders are not readily visible to motorists. Motorists involved in car/bicycle collisions report that they hit bicyclists because the bicycles and riders were not visible. Cyclists' failure to wear protective helmets may have also contributed to the severity of head injuries suffered in car-bike collisions.

## **Nighttime Cycling Safety**

1. Be sure your bike has reflectors required on all new bicycles. Each bike should have front and rear reflectors, pedal reflectors, and side rim or wheel reflectors. Use front and rear lights (as required in many States) to help make your bicycle more noticeable to cars at night. Small battery-operated lamps strapped to your legs also help.

2. Wear reflective clothing to make yourself more visible to automobile drivers. Wear a reflective vest, reflective bands on arms and legs, and reflectorized tape on helmet.
3. Always wear a good helmet with a rigid (but crushable) interior material that may help absorb the force of an impact. (This is important for daytime riding, too.)
4. Never allow children to ride at night.
5. Avoid riding on dark, narrow roadways where the posted speed limit is more than 35 mph.

For more information on bicycle safety write:

Bicycle Federation

1818 R St., NW

Washington, DC 20009

U. S. Cycling Association

1750 East Boulder St.

Colorado Springs, CO 80909

For additional information, contact your local Outreach and Extension Center or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program, 1.800.995.8503.

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