

Bicycling Safety FactSheet

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Many people ride a bicycle to work to conserve natural resources, to save money, or for exercise. Still others, such as delivery persons and couriers, use bicycles as their mode of transportation while doing their jobs. While bicycling is a great way to get around there are many hazards that can affect an employee commuting or working using a bicycle. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 500,000 people in the United States are treated in emergency departments, and more than 700 people die as a result of bicycle-related injuries each year. Before you ride, make sure your bicycle is in good working order, wear a proper fitting helmet, and be sure you can manage the ride or route you've chosen.



The following are questions you should answer before you begin your bicycle commute:

- How can I make my ride safe? When riding a bicycle: wear a bicycle helmet, obey traffic signals and signs, ride in a straight line (don't weave), signal all turns, ride with (not against) traffic, wear reflective materials and bright clothing, and be courteous to other travelers (motorist, skaters, pedestrians, etc.). For added safety while bicycling consider a rear-view mirror, biking gloves, repair kit, a mounted water bottle, bicycling shoes, wet weather gear, and a headlight and tail-light.
- Do I have the proper fitting bicycle helmet? The helmet should comfortably touch the head all the way around, and should be level and stable enough to resist even violent shakes or hard blows (with "ANSI" or "SNELL" safety certification). The helmet should be as low on the head as possible to maximize side coverage, and held level on the head with the strap comfortably snug.
- Do I have a place to bicycle safely? Pick the safest routes to and from work or other locations, riding in bike lanes if possible. Avoid narrow

shoulders and lanes and heavy and/or fast moving traffic. Routes used by cars and buses may not be the safest routes for cycling. There are often parallel streets that go through residential and lightly traveled commercial areas. Use these roads to make bicycling more enjoyable, and to reach your destination safely.

- On what kind of surface will I be riding? The surface should be smooth without potholes or cracks. Avoid dangerous drain grates, utility covers, and metal plates. Report road problems immediately to the local public works department or appropriate agency. Be cautious riding on the road/path or pick another route until the problem is fixed. Be sure to check to see that problems are fixed.
- Will I ride through any dangerous intersections? Select routes that you can see crossing traffic and with signals that give you enough time to cross the road. Avoid intersections with poor sight distance. Ask the public works department to look at the timing of specific traffic signals to improve crossings. Suggest improvement to sightlines that include cutting back vegetation, building out the path crossing, and moving parked cars that obstruct your view.
- Can I anticipate how drivers will behave along the route? Always expect the unexpected while bicycling and ask the local police department to enforce speed limits and safe driving. Set an example by riding responsibly, obeying all traffic laws, and not antagonizing other road users. Work with your community to raise awareness about vehicles and bicycles sharing the road.
- Is there a safe place to park/store my bicycle? Lock your bicycle in a safe place. Encourage your employer to provide a safe place to store and lock your bike while at work. Information regarding bicycle-parking guidelines can be found at the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals website at www.apbp.org.

Bicycling is most hazardous when you change lanes. The following are suggestions to safely change lanes in traffic:

Plan ahead

- If you are familiar with the traffic patterns, be sure to get in the correct position early.
- Keep in mind the relative speed between you and other traffic; plan accordingly.
- Be aware of road conditions that could block your progress across lanes.

Scan

- Look for traffic, pedestrians, and hazards in front of and behind you.
- Identify lane markings and traffic control devices affecting the next intersection.
- Note bus stops, driveways, crosswalks, and other special traffic zones.

Signal

- Signal your intention to turn or change lanes if you and other traffic are moving at a uniform speed.
- Signal when oncoming traffic can react safely.

Act

- Relative speed may require you to move quickly and decisively when it is safe to do so.
- In high speed overtaking traffic situations, cross all lanes at once when safe.
- Move after signaling in low- and same-speed traffic situations.

Improvise

- If you get caught between lanes while crossing traffic, ride the white line until clear.

If traffic is too heavy while changing lanes, use crosswalks. Ride to red light then move to left turn lane if volume and speed do not allow crossing.

The more comfortable you are riding a bicycle in traffic, the more routes you will have available to you. Practice your safety skills and riding habits so you will be ready to use them if needed.

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