

BICYCLE SAFETY TIPS

Each year many children die as a result of bicycle accident related injuries. A very high percentage of deaths and injury on bicycles involve children under the age of fifteen. The inexperienced rider who does not have the knowledge of traffic rules are the main cause of these deaths and injuries. To prevent such accidents, it helps to know all about your bicycle and potential hazards. Parents must take an active role and make sure that the young riders know the importance of traffic laws and safety tips for bicycles. It is also very important that each child or teenager selects the right size bicycle. Most new bicycles come equipped with accessories that make them more visible, safer and more convenient to operate. There are many styles and weight levels in bicycles and it's very important that the bicycle fit the experience level of the child. Among the more important equipment are those that make you more visible in traffic such as lights and reflectors for night riding, a white light to the front and a red reflector to the rear. Children should be acquainted with the more important traffic safety rules and guidelines. The following safety rules and guidelines should be taught to each rider

- Ride on the right side of the roadway with the flow of traffic. If with a group of riders, ride in a single file at least one bike length apart, do not weave in and out of traffic.
- Use proper hand signals for turning and stopping. To indicate a left turn, extend your arm straight out to the side. To indicate a right turn, hold the left arm in a right angle with your hand pointing up. To indicate stopping, hold the left arm at a right angle with the hand pointing down.
- A bicycle designed for one person shall not be used to carry passengers. Packages should be carried in luggage carriers to enable you to keep both hands on the handlebars.
- Be alert for vehicle operators not seeing you at intersections, give autos and pedestrians the right of way, walk your bike across busy streets.
- If you must ride at night, make sure you have a proper headlight, a red rear reflector and side reflectors. Walk your bike if you are caught by darkness and your bike is not equipped with adequate lighting.
- Wear bright, reflective clothing that people can see. Clothing should be light in color and reflective even when you ride during the day.

- Stop and be sure the way is clear before entering a roadway from a sidewalk or driveway. Watch for car doors opening into the roadway. Look ahead for drivers who may be getting out of cars. Slow down or stop if necessary to avoid running into the door.
- Ride your bicycle only on authorized streets or highways. Bicycles are not allowed on high-speed freeways and Interstate highways. Use bicycle paths where they are provided.
- Know and observe your town's or city's laws regulating the use of bicycles, including bicycle registration, licensing and riding on the sidewalks.
- Bicyclists should know and obey all traffic signals, signs and pavement markings. Don't hold onto another bicycle or any vehicle when riding a bicycle.
- Don't ride a bicycle without any hands on the handlebars. Use the crosswalk to cross at any intersection.
- Always wear a helmet. It's the law. Helmets should fit well and be comfortable with a chin strap that stays fastened. They should meet Snell or American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards.
- Keep your bikes in good condition. Be sure the mechanical parts of the bike work well and that there are reflectors on both the front and back. It's also a good idea to have a bell or horn on the handlebars to let pedestrians know when they are approaching. Keep tires inflated to the right tire pressure, and check daily for cracks, cuts and bulges in the tires.
- Do not ride double as you will have trouble balancing and steering a bicycle if you have a passenger on board. The passenger could easily be injured.
- Drain or sewer gratings generally consist of parallel bars just far enough apart to catch a wheel of a bicycle, forcing it to an abrupt and violent stop.
- When riding, watch well ahead in your path of travel and never ride over such traps. You must be careful when avoiding such hazards, as car drivers will not expect you to swerve or stop suddenly.

- Watch out for potholes, bumps, rocks, patches of ice, oil slicks, mud, cans, bottles, loose gravel, leaves or soft shoulders, any of which can cause a bicycle to "spill." Be aware of low hanging branches and low traffic signs. Control your speed when you observe such conditions, and avoid sudden stops or swerving into the roadway.
- Children under the age of nine should not ride in the street. They should ride on the sidewalk, in driveways, or in empty parking lots.

It is estimated that a half a million bicycles are stolen in the United States each year. Most bicycles are stolen from the home (yard, garage etc.) Thieves will steal for many reasons such as personal use, temporary transportation, parts or personal reasons. The bicycle owner should purchase a good bicycle locking device. A recommended locking device consists of a three foot length of 1/4 inch hardened chain together with a keyed type padlock of high quality having at least a 1/4 inch hardened shackle. The lock shackle should be secured at both "heel and toe" and the locking mechanism should be of "pin-tumbler" construction. The bicycle should be locked to a fixed, immovable object. The owner should record all vital information for a bicycle: make, model, color, identifying marks, serial number etc. and have this information available for police in the event of a theft. The bicycle should be registered with the police department which will deter a thief and assist in return of the bicycle to the owner. The bicycle should be engraved using the owners social security or drivers license. The engraving should be on the underside of the frame's diagonal bar near the crank housing. The owner should take photographs of the bicycle, date the back of same and keep them with the papers and receipts of the bicycle.

The Cheshire Police Department offers a BICYCLE RODEO safety program each year in conjunction with service clubs and businesses usually in the early part of June. The rodeo and safety day teaches a skills course for children dealing with bicycle safety. A bicycle rodeo is made up of different stations, each one geared toward teaching different lessons directly related to the accident problem of young cyclists. The bicycle shops assist with teaching the basics about bicycle sizing and maintenance. The service clubs assist with bicycle registration and prizes and the police bike patrol assists with the stations and various obstacle courses. A display of bike locks, helmets, bike lights, and reflectors, and other safety measures are set up at the location. Bicycle rodeos with a large number of participants are a great way to focus the community's attention on the importance of traffic safety. This event has proven to be a great way to get various civic groups and clubs involved in the spirit of community policing.