

SAFETY MEMO

May 9th, 2022 – Bicycle Safety

Did you know?

Bicycle Safety

Cycling is practiced for several reasons: to avoid congestion on the roads, to reduce carbon footprint, and to enjoy physical exercise. Although cycling as a mode of transport is advantageous on several fronts, there are risks to keep in mind. The Vienna Convention defines a bicycle as a vehicle with at least two wheels that is propelled solely by muscular energy.¹ Under most provincial and state Traffic Safety Acts or Highway Traffic Acts, all bicycles are considered cycles and all cycles are vehicles, therefore, cyclists must obey all provincial or state rules that apply explicitly to bicycles, cycles, and vehicles.

Regulations

The Vienna Convention mandates that bicycles shall:

- Have efficient brakes
- Be equipped with a bell capable of being heard at sufficient distances, and
- Be equipped with a red reflecting device at the rear, and devices of a white or yellow light at the front²

Personal Protective Equipment Measures

Several elements can help reduce risks, including:

- Wearing a helmet
- Wearing brightly coloured clothing
- Wearing running or cycling shoes that fit properly

Safety Mitigation Measures

- Use reflectors and reflector tape on helmet, clothing, and bicycle
- For nighttime cycling, use a headlight and a taillight. Make sure both lights are in good working order
- Mudguards may be required in some jurisdictions to prevent mud from reducing the visibility of lights and reflectors

Road Mitigation Measures

- Use bicycle lanes when available
- Respect the rules of the road, even when stationary
- Be predictable and make your intentions clear to motorists

- Use appropriate hand gestures to signal intent to turn or stop, and check behind you well before changing lanes or turning³
- Courtesy to other road users (pedestrians, cars, buses)
- Maintain 1 metre distance between the bicycle and motor vehicles on the road. Increase the distance to 1.5m if the posted speed limit is over 50 km/h⁴ (31 mile/hr)

Did You Know?

- Not all countries follow the Vienna Convention
- Not all jurisdictions require the rider to wear a helmet
- In all provinces in Canada, it is prohibited to ride a bicycle on the sidewalk. Municipal bylaws make allowances for people 14 years and younger, and selected instances when an adult may use the sidewalk
- In some jurisdictions, cycling through a crosswalk is not specifically banned in Traffic Safety Acts or Highway Safety Acts
- A cyclist may be considered a pedestrian when walking and pushing their bicycle and are therefore allowed to use the pavement / sidewalks
- In many jurisdictions, it is illegal to drink alcohol while riding a bicycle or to ride a bicycle while under the influence of alcohol or other substances.



¹European Commission. (No Date). Traffic rules and regulations for cyclists and their vehicles. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/eu-road-safety-policy/priorities/safe-road-use/cyclists/traffic-rules-and-regulations-cyclists-and-their-vehicles_en

² Ibid.

³ Bike League. (2021). Rules of the Road. Retrieved from <https://www.bikeleague.org/content/rules-road-0>

⁴ Can-Bike Canada. (2014). Provincial Cycling Laws. Retrieved from <https://canbikecanada.ca/resources/resources-2/>