

TWO WHEELER: BICYCLE SAFETY

There are 95 million bicycles in the U.S., competing with automobiles for a place on the road. In most states, bicyclists are subject to traffic laws like operators of any other vehicle. Yet many cyclists continue to regard themselves as "pedestrians on wheels," many automobile drivers treat bicycles as toys and cyclists as nuisances on the road; and parents give their children bicycles without understanding the serious risks and responsibilities of operating a bicycle.

In **TWO WHEELER: BICYCLE SAFETY**, produced and purchased from Syndistar, it is noted that more than one thousand bicyclists die in accidents every year, many times in collisions with automobiles. In two out of every three accidents involving a bicycle and a motor vehicle, the bicyclist is at fault, according to law enforcement statistics. Accident investigators are well aware that in a contest involving an automobile and a bicycle, the cyclist will pay a higher price for losing, no matter who is at fault. Bicycle riders have to learn to protect themselves, and law enforcers can help.

Knowledge of traffic rules and safe methods of bicycle operation, plus attention to proper equipment and maintenance procedures, can significantly reduce bicycle accidents.

Because police officers are called to the scene of accidents involving bicycles and are asked to respond to reports of stolen bikes, law enforcement officials are in a good position to educate the public about the basics of bicycle safety and about protecting bicycles from theft. More than 700,000 bicycles are stolen every year.



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SUGGESTED USES:

- To provide select audiences with accurate, current knowledge of bicycle safety techniques.
- To provide an educational program to serve as an introduction piece for audience discussion.

RECOMMENDED FOR:

- Community and corporate prevention programs, schools, and 4-H youth programs.

PRODUCERS

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Q. WHAT ARE THE BASIC TRAFFIC RULES FOR BICYCLISTS?

- A.** A good bicycle rider signals for turns and stops and obeys all traffic signs and signals. This includes traffic lights: green for go; yellow for caution; and red for stop. The expert bicyclist obeys stop signs, markings on pavement and at intersections, and police officers directing traffic. Bicycle riders should yield rights-of-way to pedestrians.

Q. SHOULD A BICYCLE RIDER RIDE WITH OR AGAINST THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC?

- A.** Bicycle riders should ride on the right-hand side of the street with the flow of traffic. Bikes should stay well back from moving cars, which may stop suddenly. When riding with others, bicyclists should always ride single file, one bike length apart, close to the right side of the street or roadway.

Q. DO BICYCLE RIDERS OBSERVE THE SAME RULES AS DRIVERS OF AUTOMOBILES?

- A.** Bicycle riders and automobile operators have the same responsibility to obey traffic laws. But a driver of an automobile is insulated from injury to some degree by his vehicle. Bicycle riders should practice additional safety measures for their own protection, as they are far more vulnerable to injury in case of an accident. It's best for bicycles to give cars--as well as pedestrians--the right-of-way, even though it may not be a traffic law, because it's safer for the bicyclist. Bicycle operators should also be alert for pedestrians who might step from between parked cars so as to avoid a collision which could seriously injure both. Bicyclists should be on the lookout for doors of parked cars, which might open suddenly on the street side.

Q. WHAT SHOULD BICYCLE RIDERS DO WHEN MAKING TURNS?

- A.** Bicycle riders should always hand signal when planning to turn. Left turns are particularly tricky. When making a left turn, the bicycle rider should drive straight across the street close to the right curb, wait for the light to change, then start off in the new direction with the light.

- Q. WHEN ELSE SHOULD THE BICYCLE RIDER HAND SIGNAL?**
- A.** The bicycle rider should always try to let other drivers of cars and bikes know in advance what the bike is going to do and should never make a sudden change of course.
- Q. WHAT SPECIAL SAFETY MEASURES SHOULD A BICYCLE RIDER PRACTICE?**
- A.** Bicycle riders should stop before entering a street from a driveway or sidewalk; slow down, look, and listen when coming to a corner; walk the bike across busy intersections and streets; and avoid riding across broken pavement, loose gravel, mud, or leaves, which can cause a bicyclist to lose control of the bicycle. Bicycle operators should also avoid driving too fast down hill, or on rough slippery roads, to avoid skids. Crossing street car and railroad tracks straight across will help avoid skidding on the tracks. The bicycle should never be allowed to wobble or zig-zag.
- Q. WHAT SHOULD BICYCLE RIDERS WEAR?**
- A.** The bicycle rider should dress to be seen easily by other drivers using the street. Light or bright colored clothes are best. Helmets are highly recommended, as most deaths in bicycle accidents are due to head injuries. For the best possible protection, the bicycle should "wear" a "day-glow" flag on a six foot flexible shaft to warn motorists that a bicycle is nearby.
- Q. IS IT SAFE TO RIDE "DOUBLE" ON A BIKE?**
- A.** No. It is never safe to double up. Only one person should ever ride on a bike.
- Q. ARE THERE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR RIDING A BICYCLE AT NIGHT?**
- A.** It is best to avoid riding a bicycle at night or in bad weather. If it is necessary to ride at night, the bicycle should have a good headlight and a red taillight or reflector. White or silver reflective tape should be placed on handle bars and on the front and rear forks. Red reflective tape should be placed on the rear fender.
- Q. WHAT ABOUT PROTECTING THE BICYCLE FROM THEFT?**
- A.** Keep the bicycle properly locked when parked in public places and stored indoors when not in use. Bicycles can be licensed and registered in many communities. Keep a copy of the bicycle's serial number in home files.
- Q. HOW SHOULD A BICYCLE BE MAINTAINED?**
- A.** The bike should be kept in good repair. It should be checked weekly for loose parts and adjusted. Tire pressure should also be checked and adjusted weekly. Moving parts should be cleaned and oiled regularly. The bike should be stored indoors, if possible.

Q. HOW SHOULD AUTOMOBILE DRIVERS REGARD BICYCLES?

A. Although two-thirds of accidents involving a car and a bicycle are the fault of the bicycle rider, automobile drivers should exercise care to avoid injury to a bicyclist and the grief and guilt that accompany injuring someone else, particularly a child. In general, the driver of the automobile should regard the bicycle as another vehicle and the bicycle rider as a vulnerable pedestrian. When a driver of a car spots a bicycle, assume that the bicycle will cross the path of the car, and be prepared to avoid a collision. When opening a door on the street side, check for bicycles as well as oncoming cars. Drivers of cars should familiarize themselves with the relative speed of bicycles and adjust operation of the car accordingly.

Q. WHAT ARE PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES IN ALLOWING A CHILD TO OWN AND OPERATE A BIKE?

A. Parents should decide if the child is old enough to understand the role and responsibility of a bicycle driver in traffic, if the area where the bike will be ridden is safe and suitable for bicycles, and if the child is mature enough to take care of the bicycle. Parents should ask themselves if they are willing to help the child while he or she is learning to ride and care for the bicycle and to supervise use of the bicycle. Parents should also be sure that the size and type of bicycle purchased is suitable for the age and abilities of the child.

CONCLUSION

TWO WHEELER: BICYCLE SAFETY provides an illustrated guide to the basics of owning and operating a bicycle. Police officers can utilize the video to warn parents about the risks and responsibilities of giving a bicycle to a young person and to educate both bicycle operators and automobile drivers about bicycle safety. The Community Resource Development program staff feels the presentation is useful in educating bicycle riders of any age about the intelligent ownership and operation of bicycles and in teaching automobile drivers to share the road with the millions of Americans who use bicycles for transportation and recreation, or as a serious competitive sport.

Detailed questions concerning bicycle safety or any form of crime prevention should be directed to your local police or sheriff's department. Please consult your local Extension office for additional crime prevention resources made available by the CRD program.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE
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