

# Bicycle Safety Tips



Traffic Engineering  
Department

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## Bicycle Equipment

- A well maintained and adjusted bicycle, with particular emphasis on adequate brakes and tires.
- Good light and reflectors when traveling at times of darkness is required. Bright clothing is also helpful.
- A properly worn helmet to protect against head injuries, the most common serious injury suffered by bicyclists.
- A rear view mirror attached to the helmet, glasses, or handlebars is important to permit evasive action without doing it blindly.
- Properly registered bicycle

## General Safety Tips

- Most bicycle riding is done on roads and streets shared with motor vehicles. For your safety and the safety of others, obey the rules of the road as if you were driving a car -- stop at stop signs, red lights, and signal before turning or changing lanes.
- Always ride on the right side of the road. Stay in single file as far to the right as practical. It's both dangerous and illegal to ride on the left side of a two-way roadway.
- Be extremely cautious when traveling through intersections. Be aware of traffic around you, and be prepared to brake quickly.
- Avoid traveling along the side of cars when passing through intersections -- they may turn in front of you without warning.
- Use extreme caution when passing parked cars, as occupants may not see you when opening doors or pulling out of parking spaces.

## Traffic Signal Detection

Traffic signals detect vehicles through the aid of a loop of wire buried under the street at the approach to a signal controlled intersection. When a conducting material passes over the loop a charge is induced into the wire which signals to the computer system that a vehicle is waiting at the red light.

When a bicycle approaches the loop the induced charge may be smaller than that induced by an automobile. This may result in the bicycle not being detected by the signal control system. While wire loops in City of Pleasanton intersections are designed to be sensitive enough to detect bicycles, occasionally a bicycle may not be detected.

In order to maximize detection bicyclists must keep in mind that the wire loop requires a conductor to pass over it in order to induce charge. While the frame of the bicycle is indeed constructed of conductive material it is generally the wheel rims that are most readily detected.

So, should a bicyclist find themselves stuck at a red light that is not detecting the bicycle, it would be best to try moving the front tire to a position about a foot from the intersection; this is where the wire loop is likely to be buried. When the bicycle wheel is directly above the wire loop it is much more likely that it will be detected. If you still are not detected you can activate the pedestrian button to change the light for your direction. If this occurs please contact the Traffic Engineering Department to make us aware of the location.



## Sharing the Road

Bicyclists are in no way immune to roadway accidents. In order to effectively share the road with motor vehicles bicyclists must keep to common sense safety practices; including, but not limited to, bicycling in the direction of traffic.

Studies show that bicycling against traffic is the single most common factor in collisions. The chances of being in a collision are increased as motorists are not expecting to encounter bicycles approaching them while driving. This is especially true at intersections. Head on collisions with a vehicle, resulting from bicycling against traffic, are usually much more severe than a rear end collision. In order to effectively and safely share the road bicycles must ride in the direction of traffic.

## Riding with Traffic

It is required that if you ride with traffic you follow all of the same rules that a vehicle would. This includes stopping at all stop signs and red lights. You are also required to yield to pedestrians.

Bicyclists that are more experienced tend to feel more comfortable riding with traffic and “acting” as a vehicle while traversing both stop sign controlled intersections and traffic signal controlled intersections.

Less experienced riders typically stay out of the roadway and use sidewalks and then crosswalks when crossing a street. It is important to ride with the flow of traffic and be especially cautious at driveways and intersections even when using the sidewalk.

## Intersections

Bicyclists approaching intersections need to be acutely aware of other vehicles approaching as some motorists may not see bikes crossing the intersection. Motorists are oftentimes confused when a bicyclist approaches a stop sign. They often do not know whether to treat the bicyclist as they would another vehicle, or as a pedestrian who has the right of way.

When a bicycle crosses a signal controlled intersection the bicyclist may elect to use the traffic signal lights rather than the pedestrian crosswalk. Be especially cautious around turning vehicles as they are usually checking the crosswalk for pedestrians but may not notice that a bicyclist is in the same lane. When present, bicycle lanes are built to allow bicycle through-traffic to effectively cross the intersection.

Bicyclists always have the option of getting off their bike at intersections and crossing on foot. At this point you have become a pedestrian, and even though pedestrians have the right of way, always cross cautiously.



If you need further information please call the Traffic Engineering Department at:

925-931-5677