

Bicycle Safety

With the return of our seasonal residents, comes an increase in the amount of bicyclists riding throughout the community either for leisure or exercise. During my law enforcement career, I unfortunately witnessed countless accidents involving bicyclists, many of which that could have been avoided. Even minor falls can cause serious injuries, especially when helmets are not worn. Bicyclists like motorcycles should never assume that other vehicles on the road can see them and must be alert at all times and ride defensively. Below are some rules of the road and safety tips to keep in mind while out riding. My hope and goal is to have a safe accident free community for all to enjoy!

Florida Law for Cyclists

In Florida the bicycle is legally defined as a “vehicle” and the bicyclist is a “driver.” Bicyclists have the same rights to the roadways, and must obey the same traffic laws as the drivers of other vehicles. These laws include stopping for stop signs and red lights, riding with the flow of traffic, using lights at night, yielding the right-of-way when entering a roadway and yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks. There is only one road and it is up to bicyclists and motorists to treat each other with care and respect.

Safety tips:

1. Obey traffic signs and signals - Bicycles must follow the rules of the road like other vehicles.
2. Never ride against traffic - Motorists aren't looking for bicyclists riding on the wrong side of the road. State law and common sense require that bicyclists drive like other vehicles.
3. Follow lane markings - Don't turn left from the right lane. Don't go straight in a lane marked “right-turn only.”
4. Don't pass on the right - Motorists may not look for or see a bicycle passing on the right.
5. Scan the road behind you - Learn to look back over your shoulder without losing your balance or swerving. Some riders use rear-view mirrors.
6. Keep both hands ready to brake - You may not stop in time if you brake one-handed. Allow extra distance for stopping in the rain, since brakes are less efficient when wet.
7. Wear a helmet and never ride with headphones - Always wear a helmet. Children under 16 are required to wear a helmet by law. Never wear a headphone while riding a bike.

8. Dress for the weather - In rain wear a poncho or waterproof suit. Dress in layers so you can adjust to temperature changes. Wear bright colored clothing.
9. Use hand signals - Hand signals tell motorists and pedestrians what you intend to do. Signal as a matter of law, of courtesy, and of self-protection.
10. Ride in the middle of the lane in slower traffic - Get in the middle of the lane at busy intersections and whenever you are moving at the same speed as traffic.
11. Choose the best way to turn left – There are two choices: (1) Like an auto: signal to move into the left turn lane and then turn left. (2) Like a pedestrian: ride straight to the far side crosswalk. Walk your bike across.
12. Make eye contact with drivers - Assume that other drivers don't see you until you are sure that they do. Eye contact is important with any driver which might pose a threat to your safety.
13. Look out for road hazards - Watch out for parallel-slat sewer grates, gravel, ice, sand or debris. Cross railroad tracks at right angles.
14. Use lights at night - The law requires a white headlight (visible from at least 500 feet ahead) and a rear reflector or taillight (visible up to 600 feet from behind).
15. Keep your bike in good repair - Adjust your bike to fit you and keep it working properly. Check brakes and tires regularly. Routine maintenance is simple and you can learn to do it yourself.