

## **Bicyclists, Motorist Share the Same Road, Same Responsibilities**

By Peter Flucke, WE BIKE, for Safe Communities

Summer is a great time to enjoy our community on a bicycle. Bicycling is not inherently dangerous, especially when everyone follows the rules of the road. What's dangerous are the often-illegal interactions that occur between bicyclists and motorists every day, increasing the danger for everyone.

More than 90 percent of bicyclist fatalities involve a collision with a motor vehicle. According to bicycle/motor vehicle crash statistics, when an adult bicyclist is injured, it is typically due to motorist error. When a child bicyclist is hit, it's typically the child's.

Motorist-caused collisions with bicyclists occur most often when a motorist: (1) turns left (or right) into the path of a bicyclist at an intersection; (2) fails to stop for a stop sign or other traffic control device; or (3) exits a driveway or alley without first stopping and then looking.

To safely interact with bicyclists on the roadway, motorists must follow these laws:

- Yield the right-of-way to oncoming vehicles, including bicycles, before turning left at intersections or driveways.
- Stop for all traffic control devices (stop light/stop signs) and yield to all traffic before proceeding.
- Leave at least three feet between you and a bicyclist (or any other vehicle) when passing.
- Do not exceed posted speed limits, and reduce speeds when necessary (especially at night).
- Do not drink and drive.

Bicyclists need to follow all the rules of the road - especially stopping for stop lights and signs.

Parents can do a great deal to teach their kids to be safe bicyclists, and to help children develop habits to last a lifetime:

- Don't allow children to ride their bicycles unless wearing a properly fitted bike helmet. (A helmet should be parallel with the ground and fit snugly.)
- Set a good example and wear a bicycle helmet too.
- Only buy a helmet that has Snell, ASTM or CPSC approved labels. Hockey, football or other sports helmets are not bike helmet substitutes.
- Teach children to be safe bicyclists:
  - Look left, right and left again before entering the street.
  - Go to the edge of parked cars to search for traffic when crossing the street.
  - Look over your left shoulder before moving toward the center of the road.
  - Be alert for cars leaving or entering driveways or making turns across your path.
- Obey the same signals and signs as motorists, e.g., stop signs, traffic signs, yield signs.
- Warn pedestrians if you are riding on sidewalks and paths.
- Be sure to use hand signals when biking.

- Make sure children are visible. Use lights and reflectors at night. Wear bright-colored clothes by day.

*(Information provided by Dean Health System, Madison Department of Transportation - Traffic Engineering, St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center)*

For guidance on fitting your child's bicycle helmet, visit Safe Communities' website at [safercommunity.net](http://safercommunity.net).