

## Five Bicycle Safety Concepts to Teach 9-12 Year Olds



April, 1994

An effective bicycle education program will include classroom instruction and a practical on-the-bike skills component for the participants. Younger children should be focusing on basic bicycle handling skills and simple traffic concepts. The older (9-12 year old) bicyclists are ready for more advanced handling skills and concepts. The concepts essential for a bicyclist to understand, the behavior leading to the cause of the accident, and what to teach are summarized:

### 1. **Stop and look before entering a road or a street.**

Bicyclists too often ride into a street from a driveway without looking first. They weave in and out of sidewalks, parking lots and streets. These behaviors result in 15% of all victims involved in bicycle/motor vehicle accidents. Seventy-five percent of the victims are 8-14 years old.

Bicyclists too often ride through stop signs. Riding through a stop sign leads to 10% of all bicycle/motor vehicle accidents. Seventy-five percent of the victims are 14 years old and older.

#### *Behavior leading to the cause of the accident:*

The bicyclist is accustomed to very little traffic on low volume streets and has not developed the “automatic look before entering” behavior. The bicyclist often misjudges the speed and stopping distance of automobiles and often believes all motorists will avoid a collision with a bicyclist. Bicyclists know the traffic laws but they choose to ignore them.

#### *What to teach?*

- Stop, look and listen before entering a roadway
- Ride in a straight line on the right side of the roadway
- Don't weave in and out of traffic
- Be predictable. Don't do unexpected things
- Obey the traffic laws

### 2. **Ride with traffic on the right side of the street.**

The motorist, while looking to the left to make a right hand turn, collides with the cyclist approaching from the motorist's right on the wrong side of the street.

#### *Behavior leading to the cause of the accident:*

The fear of being hit by autos approaching from the rear causes bicyclists to wrongly ride facing traffic.

#### *What to teach?*

- Ride on the right side of the roadway

### 3. **Ride in a straight line and look before turning or changing direction.**

The bicyclist all too often makes a sudden left turn into the path of an oncoming automobile. This represents 8% of all bicyclist/motor vehicle accidents. Most victims are 8-14 years old.

#### *Behavior leading to the cause of the accident:*

The bicyclist is distracted or doesn't think to

scan for traffic before changing direction. This situation may occur as a bicyclist avoids a hazard in the roadway.

*What to teach?*

- Ride in a straight line
- Search for hazards
- Scan before changing lanes

#### 4. **Ride only during daylight hours.**

The bicyclist riding on a rural roadway during dusk or nighttime is hit by an automobile approaching from the rear. This accounts for only 7% of all bicycle/motor vehicle accidents, but accounts for 30% of all fatalities.

*Behavior leading to the cause of the accident:*

The bicyclist is unaware of the high risk of bicycling at night and does not understand the problem of a motorist observing a bicyclist at night.

*What to teach?*

- Don't ride at night
- Tape a quarter to your bicycle so you can phone home for a ride just in case you get caught after dark

#### 5. **Wear a helmet.**

Most serious bicycle related injuries involve head injury.

*Behavior leading to the cause of the accident:*

Most serious bicycle accidents do not involve a motorist. Accidents can happen in driveways, streets, parking lots, fields, just about anywhere. Cyclists not wearing a helmet are taking an unnecessary risk.

*What to teach?*

- Wear a helmet
- How to choose a helmet (Information Bulletin #1)

