



BICYCLE SAFETY

MESSAGE TO PARENTS, TEACHERS AND MOTORISTS

Many children are now riding bicycles back and forth to school. Parents, teachers and motorists should take special precautions to make sure these trips are safe. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) urge parents and teachers to teach proper bicycle riding skills and habits to children. Parents, teachers and other adults can act as role models by exhibiting proper riding behavior. The two agencies urge motorists to watch for children riding bicycles and to use extra caution during warm weather and during those hours when children are most likely to be traveling to and from school.

Each year, almost 900 bicyclists are killed in collisions between bicycles and motor vehicles on roadways. Another 300 bicyclists are killed in non-roadway collisions in locations such as parks, bike paths and driveways. More than one million bicycle injuries are treated annually. About one-third of the deaths and about two-thirds of the injuries involve children under the age of 15. Three out of four deaths are due to head injury, and about one-third of the injuries are to the head and face. The most severe injuries are those that cause permanent damage to the brain.

Many of these deaths and injuries can be prevented through proper education and training. Parents and teachers play a major role in educating children in proper behavior and techniques. Motorists can be alert to bicyclists and take particular precautions with children.

BICYCLE HELMETS

Studies have shown that using bicycle helmets can reduce head injuries by up to 95 percent. Parents must insist that children wear a bicycle helmet at all times while riding a bicycle. Parents should also wear helmets when riding to act as role models for the child, as well as for their own protection.

A bicycle helmet should have a snug, but comfortable fit. Parents should not purchase it as something the child will "grow into." Helmets are available with different thicknesses of internal padding to help in proper fit. The helmet must have a chin strap and buckles that will stay securely fastened. The helmet should fit snugly atop the head.

There are two nationally-recognized safety standards for bicycle helmets sold in the United States. Both of these standards contain requirements for the helmet features discussed above. Helmets meeting the Snell Memorial Foundation requirements or the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) requirements will have a label from that organization on the helmet. NHTSA recommends that bicyclists wear only those helmets that are labeled as conforming with one of these voluntary standards. These helmets have been tested and will likely provide better protection than other helmets. If the helmet is involved in a crash, replace it or have it



examined by the manufacturer before reuse. The CPSC is now evaluating bicycle helmet safety standards to determine if their effectiveness can be increased.

Helmets come in a variety of styles. The child should participate in the selection of the helmet to assure proper fit. Parents should make certain that the child uses it all the time while riding a bicycle.

CLOTHING

In addition to a helmet, riders should wear the proper clothing. Clothing should be of light color and, when riding at night, should be marked with reflective materials. Vests, jackets, tape, wrist bands and other items that make the rider visible to motorists are widely available.

Clothing should be close fitting to avoid getting caught in the moving parts of the bicycle. Headphones should never be worn, as they hinder the child's ability to hear traffic.

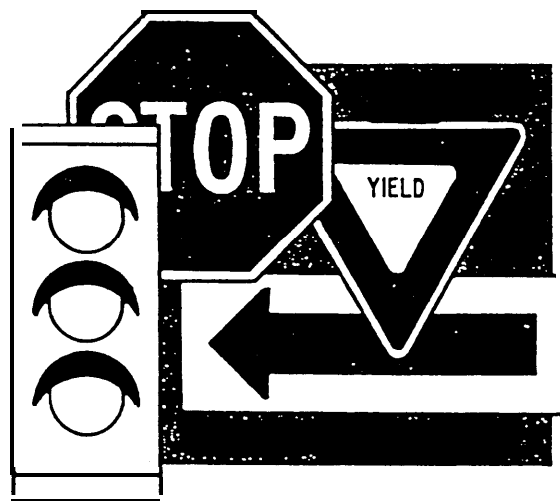
THE BICYCLE

Make certain that the child's bike is the correct size, is safely maintained and has reflectors. The CPSC'S 1976 bicycle regulations require reflectors on the front and rear of the bicycle, on the pedals, and on the wheels. Wheel reflectors can be reflective tire sidewalls, reflective wheel rims or spoke-mounted reflectors. Front and rear lights on the bicycle improve nighttime visibility for the bicyclists and increase the recognizability of the bicycle for other road users and may be required by law in many jurisdictions. Make sure that books and other items are properly secured to the bike or are carried in a back pack on the child's back.

RULES OF THE ROAD

If a bicyclist rides in the road, the cyclist must obey traffic laws that apply to motor vehicle operators (for example, driving with traffic). Instruct the child on the rules of the road. Young children should not ride at night. Children under

age nine should not ride in the roadway, as they do not have the skills to identify and avoid dangerous traffic situations. Bicyclists should ride single file and signal their intentions to other road users, including pedestrians. The child should be taught to look left-right-left when entering the road or crossing an intersection, as is done when crossing the street as a pedestrian.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Parents and schools should work together to identify safe routes to school and to develop a bicycle safety education program. Police departments and State highway safety offices are good sources for booklets that explain bicycle safety roles. Enroll the child in a bike safety education program. If one is not available in the community, work to develop one using materials and information available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Local police departments are frequently interested in providing bicycle education programs to children.

For further information, contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Safety Countermeasures Division, NTS-23, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590 or the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207.