

Safety on Two Wheels: Bicycles and Motorcycles



Whether you're riding a bike or a motorcycle, the Bay Area is a great place to get around on two wheels. The tips below should help you stay safe as you zip past traffic jams and enjoy the scenery.

Tips for Safe Cycling

1. Wear a well-fitting, brightly colored helmet.
2. If you're riding at night, the law requires a front headlight. A bright white light with a flashing mode makes you easy to spot, even during the day.
3. Keep your head up and look ahead. Avoid riding across unknown objects or over slippery surfaces.
4. Don't ride with unsecured passengers.
5. When riding with friends, ride single file with space between bikes. Share the road and don't block car traffic riding two by two.
6. Never ride against traffic. You could get a ticket, and it raises your risk of getting into an accident.
7. Avoid busy roads and peak traffic times if you can.
8. If you're riding at night, wear bright colored clothing or put reflective tape on yourself and your bike.
9. Maintain your bike. Keep chains clean and lubricated and inspect your brake pads regularly.
10. Do not ride with headphones on.
11. Always use hand signals.
12. Keep both hands on the handlebars (except when signaling) and both feet on the pedals.
13. If you can avoid riding at twilight or in the dark, do so, especially on narrow roads or roads with speed limits above 35 mph.

Risk Factors for Bicycle Accidents

According to government statistics, California ranks sixth out of the 50 states for bike fatalities per capita.

NIGHT RIDING

Nearly a third of cycling fatalities occurred between 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm. Accidents resulting in serious injury or death tend to happen between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am, with alcohol often involved.

WRONG-WAY AND SIDEWALK RIDING

In a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) study of 2,931 cycling accidents from six states, 32% involved cyclists driving the wrong way.

SPEED

Speed has been identified as a contributing factor in all types of crashes.

PARKING AND DRIVEWAYS

Be especially aware at intersections: Bicyclists are often hit by left-turning motorists. Another common and potentially serious accident is getting "doored" when riding too close to parked vehicles.

NOT WEARING A HELMET

The use of a well-fitting helmet significantly reduces the risk of fatal injury, or serious head, brain, or facial injury.

Safety Tips for Motorcyclists

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), a person driving a motorcycle is 30 times more likely to die in a crash than either a driver or passenger in a car. What's more, nearly half of all motorcycle deaths don't involve another vehicle. The tips below can help reduce your risk of accidents.

CHOOSE YOUR BIKE WISELY

Your bike should fit you. When seated, you should be able to rest both feet flat on the ground with the handlebars and controls in easy reach. Invest in anti-lock brakes. According to IIHS, motorcycles with ABS brakes are 37% less likely to be involved in a fatal crash than bikes with conventional brakes.

KEEP YOUR BIKE TRAVEL-READY

Do a quick walk-around before you take off. Check your tires, lights, horn, directional signals, chain, belt, or shaft and brakes.

WEAR YOUR SAFETY GEAR

Wearing leather, long sleeves and pants, gloves, and boots can literally save your skin. Invest in a quality helmet. Make sure it's the right size, and wear eye protection. A full-face helmet is the safest choice. (Look for a Department of Transportation certification sticker on the helmet).

BE VISIBLE

- Don't assume drivers see you. They often don't notice motorcycles.
- Remember that cars and trucks have blind spots and be careful when you pass.
- Flash your brake light when you slow down or stop.
- Don't be afraid to use your horn.
- Keep your headlight on night and day.
- Bright clothing and a light colored helmet will make you easier to see at night. Use reflective strips and decals on your bike and clothing.

BE ALERT

- Watch for turning vehicles.
- Look out for changing conditions.
- Try not to weave between lanes.
- Watch for little things that could cause a spill, like leaves, sand, or pebbles.
- Don't ride when you are tired.

DRIVE DEFENSIVELY

- Remember, automobile drivers often don't notice motorcycles. When they do, they have a hard time judging your speed.
- Give yourself the space and time to respond to other motorists' actions, and give them time to respond to you.
- Ride in the part of a lane where you are most visible.
- Watch for turning vehicles.
- Signal your next move in advance.
- Avoid bad weather conditions.

RESPECT THE RULES

- Don't ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Follow the rules of the road and don't exceed the speed limit.

PRACTICE

Practice your skills before you hit the highway. It takes experience to handle your bike in heavy traffic and in challenging conditions like rainy, windy weather or uneven sandy roads.

TAKE A CLASS

Even seasoned bikers can benefit from taking a class with the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. They have four levels of training, from basic biking to circuit riding. To locate a Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Hands on RiderSM course call 1-800.446.9227 or visit www.msf-usa.org.

