

# Bicycle safety



**FARMERS**<sup>®</sup>

Gets you back where you belong.<sup>®</sup>



# Bicycle safety

Every year about 800 bicyclists die in accidents. It has been estimated that about 1 million more non-fatal injuries occur each year because of bicycles.

Bicycling is freedom – freedom appreciated by you and the millions of other Americans who ride bicycles. But your safety, and that of everyone else on the road, depends on everyone knowing and following the same rules.

At Farmers we are committed to giving our customers quality care. We've prepared this brochure because of that commitment.

This brochure contains bicycle safety tips for you, your family and your friends. We've made it available as a service to our friends and neighbors. Some of these tips may prevent damage to, or loss of, your bicycle. Some of these tips may even save your life.

## Children and bikes

It's your responsibility to educate your child on the importance of bicycle safety. Remember: a bike is your child's first vehicle, and you are the driver education teacher.

You may think your child is safe because he or she just rides around the neighborhood. But

serious bicycle crashes often occur on quiet neighborhood streets. This is especially true for young children.



Children under age 9 should not ride their bikes in the street. They are not able to identify and adjust to the many dangerous traffic situations.

Parents often make the mistake of selecting a bike that is obviously too big for their child, thinking that he/she will grow into it. Not only is learning to maneuver and ride an oversized bike extremely difficult, but much of the enjoyment is lost and the risk of falls and collisions is increased.

## Bicycle helmets

A helmet is the most important item of safety equipment that a bicyclist can have. Three out of every four bike riders killed in crashes die from head injuries. A helmet decreases head injury by about 85 percent. You and your child need the protection that a good helmet provides. In some states, it is now mandatory that children wear a safety helmet.



- Every bicyclist should wear a helmet. Buy only approved helmets which carry the SNELL and/or ANSI stickers inside.
- A white or yellow helmet makes the bicyclist more conspicuous in traffic and thus can help him or her to avoid collisions.

Will your child wear a safety helmet? Starting a new safety habit can be hard. Several million bicyclists now own and wear helmets when they ride their bicycles. With the right kind of gentle but firm encouragement from you, your child will join the growing helmet movement. What can you do to help?

- Encourage the parents of your children's friends to buy helmets.
- Let your child help pick out the helmet.
- Begin the helmet habit with the first bicycle.
- Always insist your child wear the helmet.
- When you ride together, wear your own helmet.

## On the road

A bicyclist on a roadway or a paved shoulder has all of the rights and responsibilities that apply to a driver of a motor vehicle.

Always try to cycle predictably and under complete control so that others will know what to expect from you. In a significant number of collisions, motorists report either not seeing the cyclist at all, or not in time to avoid the collision.



Left  
turn

- Bicycles must keep to the right of the road. They should ride as close as is possible to the right-hand curb or edge of the road except when passing another vehicle, when preparing for a left turn, or when avoiding unsafe conditions.

- Know and obey traffic regulations, signs, signals and markings.
- Choose to ride on a route with few cars, slow traffic and clearly marked intersections.
- Cycle defensively; look out for the other guy.
- Always stop and look left-right-left before entering the road.

- Cycle with traffic, not against it. Ride single file.
- Don't carry passengers or items that interfere with your control.

- Never hitch on to motor vehicles.
- Use hand signals. Hand signals tell motorists what you intend to do
- When moving from one lane to another, always look back first and yield to traffic.
- At really busy corners, you may want to walk your bike like a pedestrian, especially when making a left turn.

- When approaching hazardous surfaces, such as grates or wet leaves, reduce your speed before you reach the hazard. Avoid quick turns and sudden stops, and accelerate and brake more slowly than usual.



Right  
turn



Stop

**Remember:** It's against the law to ride a bicycle under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

## Safety equipment

As a general rule, any equipment that makes it easier for drivers to see you and does not restrict your movements is recommended.

- Wear a helmet that carries the SNELL and/or ANSI stickers inside.
- Equip your bicycle with lights and reflectors. Every bike should have at a minimum a white front reflector, a red rear reflector, two side-wheel reflectors and a headlight. Keep reflectors clean and replace any that are broken.
- Wear bright or fluorescent clothing during the day and reflective clothing at night.
- A rearview mirror is helpful. It allows the cyclist to keep track of what is going on behind him or her.
- A brightly colored flag (as tall as possible) should be attached to the back of a child's bike so the child can be seen easily by other drivers.
- A horn or a bell alerts pedestrians and other riders of the cyclist's approach.
- Avoid long skirts and flare pants. Clasp pants to leg with safety clip or leg bands.
- A rear rack or carrier aids safety by providing a way to carry packages while leaving the bicyclist's hands free.
- A child 4 years or younger, or weighing 40 pounds or less, must ride on a seat which holds the child in place and protects the youngster from moving parts. The child must also wear an approved helmet.



## Rainy day cycling

The risk of a fall is increased when water covers the road. Wet weather requires precautions.

Cycling is most hazardous when it first begins to rain, when road oil and dirt mix to form a slippery surface.



Wet pavement reduces traction. If the rain is heavy enough, the front tire may ride on top of the water, a process called hydroplaning, which causes a loss of braking and steering control.

If you must ride in the rain, do the following:

- Check your tire treads. Worn tire treads may cause a loss of control in wet weather.
- Ride in the tracks of the motor vehicles in front of you. This can give you a drier surface and better traction.
- Try to avoid surfaces that are especially slippery when wet: manhole covers, painted lines and the oily center of a lane.
- Some types of brake shoes are better than others when wet; consult your bicycle dealer. Caliper brakes, which are now standard equipment on most bicycles, can lose most of their braking power in wet weather.
- Rain reduces the motorist's vision; it's always a good idea to wear brightly colored clothing to make you more conspicuous while cycling, but in rainy weather it's especially important!

## Preventing bicycle theft

A bicycle is an investment worth protecting whether it's your old 10-speed or your child's new mountain bike. A few basic precautions may save you a lot of aggravation in the long run.

- Always lock your bike when you must leave it unguarded.
- Buy the best locking system you can afford; none is as expensive as a new bike.
- Choose a locking system that cannot be easily cut, such as a U-shaped lock or a heavy duty lock with a strong wire cable.
- Always try to secure the bicycle's frame and both wheels to a stationery object, such as a post or a fence. It's not enough to secure only the front wheel, because then the rest of the bike can be easily stolen.
- Protect your investment by recording your bicycle's serial number; this may help to recover your bicycle if it's stolen.
- Register your bicycle with your local police department. Not only will this increase the chances of recovering your bike if it's stolen, a license sticker in plain view might discourage a would-be thief.

## Caring for your bicycle

Maintaining your bicycle is important for your safety. Equipment that is worn out or in need of tightening or alignment is not dependable.

Cleaning, adjustments and minor repairs are within the capabilities of most bicyclists. However, major adjustments and repairs should be done by a trained bicycle mechanic.

*This brochure contains generally accepted safety information regarding bicycle safety. Because every situation is different, the distributor of this brochure cannot be held responsible for the use of the information contained herein.*



# Bicycle maintenance checklist:

- Handlebar position check** – The handlebars should be tight and properly aligned with the front wheel.
- Pedal check** – The pedals should be firmly secured to the crankarms and turn freely. Rubber treads should be complete and intact.
- Bicycle wheel check** – To test the wheels for proper balance, lift the bicycle up and spin the wheels. The spinning wheel should not rub against any part of the frame, fender or brakes.
- Bicycle spoke check** – Replace any missing spokes.
- Wheel rim check** – Keep wheel rims free of rust and dents or kinks, which might interfere with proper seating of the tire.
- Bicycle tire check** – The condition of the bike's tires will affect its handling. Check your bicycle manual for the correct air pressure; then pump the tires up to that air pressure using a hand pump and check the pressure with a tire gauge. Replace tires when tread is worn smooth or bald spots appear.
- Chain check** – A chain in need of adjustment will make a cracking or grinding noise. When a chain is in its proper position it should have approximately 1/2 inch of lag.
- Caliper hand brakes check** – The levers should not be able to touch the handlebars before the brakes are fully engaged and the wheel is locked. Brake shoes should have at least a 3/16 inch rubber braking surface and be centered over the rim. The nuts holding the brake shoes to the arms should be tight.



**F A R M E R S**

Gets you back where you belong.®

[www.farmers.com](http://www.farmers.com)