

Loss Control Insights

Coexisting With Bicyclists: 10 Rules for Drivers

Love Them or Hate Them, Cyclists Have Road Rights

Every year, hundreds of bicyclists die in traffic accidents involving motor vehicles, and thousands more are injured. Bicycling advocates say drivers can play a big role in reducing those grim statistics, paving the way for peaceful coexistence. It's a two-way street, of course. Bicyclists have responsibilities, too.

But for you drivers, here are our 10 rules of the road for driving near bicyclists.

1. **Appreciate Bicyclist Vulnerability:** A car weighs 2 tons or so, while the average bike is a mere 20 pounds, in any collision, any physical interaction between car and bike, the bike always loses.



2. **Know Bicyclists' Rights:** Drivers sometimes have little idea of the traffic laws that apply to bicyclists. In fact, bicycles in the roadway are considered vehicles. Bicycle riders on public roads have the same rights and responsibilities as motorists, and are subject to the same rules and regulations.

3. **Adjust That Attitude:** Motorists tend to think of cyclists as in their way but the reality is we should think of them as equals, just as entitled to the roadway as drivers. Drivers who get impatient with bicyclists might want to stop for a moment and think about the human being on that bike, a friend or family member?

4. **Consider the Benefits of Bicycling — for Drivers:** One cyclist on the road is one less car. Cyclists don't wear out the road and hey may lessen traffic congestion.

5. **Beware of intersections:** Intersections are venues for serious car-cycle collisions. Drivers making turns, especially, should watch out for cyclists. A cyclist may be a little behind and to the right of you, and may be planning to ride straight ahead. If you don't signal your turn, you could wind up hitting each other. Remember bikes can easily go 15-20 mph.

6. Give Cyclists 4 Feet of Clearance

In 2011, Pennsylvania enacted a bill that requires a 4-foot gap, this rule helps drivers by giving them a concrete frame of reference, he says. Besides giving cyclists that breathing room, it's best for drivers to pass them slowly and smoothly but motorist's tendency is to speed up and get by the cyclists as quickly as possible.

7. **Look Around — but Not at Your Phone:** Drivers who have hit cyclists often say the same frightening, sobering thing: "I never saw him before I hit him." If drivers only expect other cars on the road, they're setting themselves up for a potentially dangerous situation.

8. Look Before You Exit Your Car: Cyclists are terrified of being “doored”. Imagine a rider pedaling along next to a row of parked cars and a door opens. The impact can send the cyclist flying, and riders have died when they've been thrown into traffic.

9. Accept That Bicyclists Are Here To Stay: Bicycling is on the rise. People are taking it up for exercise or to reduce commuting costs. Pittsburgh, among other cities, have seen an increase in commuter cyclists.

10. It's time to make peace with cyclists — for everyone's safety. And remember if in doubt yield, exercise the same caution as you would for an approaching vehicle.