



Health & Fitness

Whether biking to work or just for fitness or fun, commit these six things to memory

By Steven P. Knowlton
SPECIAL TO OUR TOWN

May 15-19 is National Bike to Work Week, and while you might not be planning to leave the car in the driveway and commute on two wheels, if you like to ride the annual initiative it is a good time for a refresher on some of the rules of the road when cyclists and motorized vehicles share the blacktop. Because it's just that – sharing – both parties need to be alert for the other at all times.

Rockland offers many attractions for cyclists, whether casual riders, members of bicycle clubs or participants in the annual Grand Fondo, which winds through county roads to Bear Mountain and back.

River Road along the Hudson is also a popular route, but cyclists are required to ride single file along the two-lane route through Piermont and Grand View. Cyclists also use Route 9W, which is more dangerous because of narrow traffic lanes and absence of shoulders in some stretches of highway.

Rockland also has dedicated, marked bicycle routes. Another is being developed along Greenbush Road as a bypass to Route 303. Most roads in Rockland where cyclists and motorists share the pavement

have been the scene of collisions, in which have caused injury and death to cyclists.

While motorists are required to use caution while sharing roads, bicyclists also must follow all traffic laws – stopping at red lights, stop signs and obeying traffic signs. Bicyclists may utilize turning lanes when traveling on roadways, and are required to ride as far to the right as safety and road conditions permit. If there are hazards at the right side of the road, a bicyclist may use the entire lane until it is safe to move right again.

Drivers must have a license, proof of insurance and a vehicle registration ready to present to police in the event of a crash. Cyclist “must-haves” include your helmet, cell phone and a state-issued ID. These three things should always be with you when riding.

Most states have so-called “Safe Passing” laws defining how much room a motorist must give to a bicyclist. Pennsylvania requires four feet between the bicycle and car, and the driver must drive at “a prudent and reduced speed.” New York’s law does not specify a distance but states a driver must pass “the bicycle at a safe distance until safely clear.” New Jersey, unfortunately has no safe passing law.

If the worst occurs and you are in a

crash with a car while riding your bike, here are some important steps you should take to preserve your rights:

Call police:

They may not always come, especially if you say you are not hurt and do not require medical assistance. But symptoms could take days to manifest themselves. The best approach is to say you were hit hard (if you were) or took a hard spill and may need a medical exam. But be warned: faking an injury is wrong, and constitutes fraud.

Confirm information:

Obtain the driver’s insurance, license, and contact information. Use your cell phone to photograph these documents. Photograph the car and the license plates. Get the driver’s cell phone number, then call to verify it. Take photos of the accident scene, your bike and anything else you think may be important.

Gather Witness Information:

Did anyone see the accident or come to assist? Get names and contact information in case you need to verify facts.

Preserve evidence: Fight the urge to get your bike fixed right away. Keep photographs of damages. Take the bike to your

local bike shop to be examined by a mechanic. Have him list all damages and estimated repair costs. Keep the bike in that condition until you settle with the insurance company and have been paid.

Get checked out: If your doctor determines you’re okay, great. But if injuries show up later, after you said you were okay and didn’t need a doctor, it may be hard to convince the insurance company your injuries are real, and accident-related.

Never volunteer that you are okay:

If a real injury develops after you assure everyone you are alright, the insurance company may question your truthfulness. If you must say something at the scene, say you were hit hard and feel you need a medical examination.

Bicycling is a great way to get from Point A to Point B in an eco-friendly way. It is also a fun and rigorous workout that anyone can do. But ride defensively, stay safe, and know what to do if an accident occurs.

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