

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS WHEN RIDING BICYCLES TO AND FROM SCHOOL

In Maine, the bicycle is legally defined as a vehicle. Bicyclists have the same rights to the roadway, and must obey the same traffic laws as the operators of other vehicles. These laws include stopping for stop signs and red lights, riding with the flow of traffic, using lights at night, and yielding the right-of way when entering a roadway.

Bicyclists are associated with more childhood injuries than any other consumer product except the automobile. More than 27.7 million children age 5 to 14 ride bicycles (70%). Head injury is the leading cause of death in bicycle accidents, accounting for more than 60% of bicycle deaths.

It is recommended all bicycle riders and passengers should wear a bicycle helmet.

Parents and guardians overestimate their children's bicycle safety skills. Children are naturally impulsive and have difficulty judging speed, spatial relations, distance and velocity. Auditory and visual acuity, depth perception and proper scanning ability develop gradually and do not fully mature until at least age 10. Children under age 10 should not ride a bicycle unsupervised by an adult.

The following guidelines have been written to advise parents/guardians of bicycle safety guidelines and to identify the responsibilities that parents and guardians should be aware of if their children are to become safe bike riders.

It is recommended all bicycle riders and passengers should wear a bicycle helmet that is properly fitted, is fastened securely upon the head by a strap, and that meets the nationally recognized standards for bicycle helmets.

- Bicyclists must obey all traffic controls and signals.
- Bicyclists must use a fixed, regular seat for riding.
- A bicycle may not be used to carry more persons at one time than the number for which it is designed or equipped.
- Bicyclists and passengers should wear a helmet.
- At least one hand must be kept on the handlebars while riding.
- A bicyclist must not wear a headset, headphone or any listening device other than a hearing aid while riding.
- Every bicycle must be equipped with a brake or brakes, which allow the rider to stop within 25 feet from a speed of 10 miles per hour on dry, level, clean pavement.
- When riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks, a bicyclist has the same rights and duties as a pedestrian.
- A bicyclist riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and must give an audible signal before passing.

- A bicycle operated between sunset and sunrise must be equipped with a lamp on the front exhibiting a white light visible from 500 feet to the front and both a red reflector and a lamp on the rear exhibiting a red light visible from 600 feet to the rear.
- Riding in single file is required except on bike paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.
- A bicyclist must use the proper hand signals when making turns.
- Bicyclists are not allowed to ride on the shoulder or roadway of freeways or interstate highways.
- Civil penalties may be issued for violations of bicycle laws as well as for moving and non-moving violations if applicable.
- A bicyclist may not allow a passenger to remain in a child seat or carrier when not in immediate control of the bicycle.
- A bicyclist that is not traveling at the same speed of other traffic must ride as close as practicable to the right hand curb or edge of the roadway.
- A bicyclist operating on a one-way street with two or more traffic lanes may ride as close to the left-hand edge of the roadway as practicable.