

6 Ways to Avoid Accidents on the Bike Rally!

We have all worked very hard so far, training, fundraising and planning, so let's have a good time when we're out on the road and not have it spoiled by accidents and injury! Here are some important things to keep in mind on the road; whether you're a long-time confident rider or are still feeling timid on the road with traffic, these tips apply to you.

- 1) **Be predictable.** When you are predictable, drivers and other cyclists can predict your moves and plan accordingly. Don't weave in and out of parked cars, don't weave unpredictably amongst other cyclists; don't weave at all. If you were in a car you wouldn't do it; don't do it on a bike. It is alarming to others on the road (whether drivers or cyclists) to have a bike veer out in front of them – you are never the only one on the road. Respect that!
- 2) **Be aware.** Be a defensive driver on your bike because others are not always predictable. Watch parked cars to see if someone is about to open a door; always do shoulder checks when changing lanes to make sure it's clear to move over (even if you're just passing another cyclist). And don't let conversation or a great view distract you from road conditions (including hazardous railroad tracks!).
- 3) **Communicate.** If you are passing another cyclist, give a verbal “on your left” to let them know. If you are turning or stopping, give a verbal- or hand-signal for those behind you. If there is a hazard on the road, give a verbal- or hand-signal. Remember that it is always better to be safe than to signal: if you can't give a hand signal because you're on a downhill slope that requires both hands to brake, choose braking. Give a verbal alert if you can, but above all, be safe on your own bike.
- 4) **Be confident.** Stake your place in the lane, and ride in a straight line about one meter left of the curb, or edge of the road if there is no curb. Don't ride as far to the right as you possibly can, because it will make it easier for drivers to use the whole lane, and that will result in squeezing you off the road. If you hold your place in the lane, drivers will be forced to pull to the left to pass you, leaving you a safe amount of space.
- 5) **Share the road.** Don't ride two- or three-abreast: this makes it difficult for both drivers and cyclists to pass safely. Don't assume you're the fastest thing on the road, b/c there is always somebody faster, and if they're motorized they have the upper hand. As cyclists, we have the same rights and responsibilities on the road as drivers do, so stake your place and ride respectfully.
- 6) **Pacelines require skills:** If you haven't been coached by experienced riders in the skills of drafting and paceline riding, don't just wing it! There are skills involved in riding this close together, and we have seen a lot of group pile-ups when people try to do this and don't really know how.

Thanks for being smart on the road! It's in everyone's best interest!