

# CYCLING MADE SAFE



## NEW YORK'S BICYCLE HELMET LAW

Compliments of State Senator  
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Dear Neighbor,

The best defense against bicycle accidents is safe and skilled handling of the bicycle. But as we all know, accidents are sometimes unavoidable. That is why wearing a helmet makes good biking sense. Not only is it the sensible thing for adults to do, it's the law for kids.

New York State requires children under the age of 14 to wear protective head gear when riding bikes, in-line skates, skateboards or non-motorized scooters. The law is referred to as the "Bicycle Helmet Law" and it's aimed at protecting children from sustaining head injuries in bicycle accidents — injuries that can often be serious and sometimes fatal. In the case of an accident, helmets will bear much of the impact and protect the skull and brain from the trauma that could result from a dangerous fall or collision.

If there is any question about the need for everyone to wear bicycle helmets, then consider the findings of the New York State Department of Health, which says an average of 54 New Yorkers are killed annually in bicycle accidents. In addition, more than 2,000 are hospitalized. Of those hospitalizations, 38 percent involve brain injuries.

Children ages five to nineteen are most at risk for being hospitalized with a brain injury. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than half a million people are treated annually in hospital emergency rooms for bicycle related injuries.

I hope you will take the time to review the requirements of the Bicycle Helmet Law and the other important safety information contained in this brochure. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Best regards and safe cycling!

Hugh T. Farley  
49th Senate District

# Bicycle Safety in New York

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that, on average - in just one year - more than 52,000 people are injured in bicycle/motor vehicle traffic crashes and more than 600 of those people die. Bicyclist deaths accounted for two percent of all motor vehicle traffic fatalities, and made up two percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes during the year. Bicycle helmets can help save lives, but all cyclists need to wear them. Children are at particularly high risk.

An acceptable bicycle helmet is one that has been approved by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Helmets that meet these standards have been tested and proven effective in protecting cyclists against head injuries. Look for a label or tag noting that the helmet meets CPSC standards.

In New York State, children under the age of 14 must wear an approved bicycle helmet when they operate a bike or ride as a passenger. This requirement also applies when youngsters ride a bicycle fitted with training wheels. Children aged one through four are required to wear certified safety helmets and ride in a specially designed child safety seat. Children under age one are prohibited from being transported on a bicycle. Any parent or guardian who permits his or her child to violate the helmet law is subject to a fine of up to \$50.

In addition, bicycles in New York State must be equipped with the following:

- A brake that is capable of making the bike tires skid on dry, level pavement;
- A bell, horn or other device that can be heard at least 100 feet away;
- A headlight and taillight; and
- Reflectors on the wheels.



## Bike Helmets: Finding, Making the Perfect Fit

**B**uy the smallest comfortable size and use the sizing pads (usually included) to refine the fit. Put the helmet on; try to push it to the sides, front and back. If it moves enough to create a gap between your head and the pads, use thicker pads. If it's still loose, get a smaller size that touches your head at the crown, sides, front and back.

**Adjust the straps.** With the helmet level across your forehead just above your eyebrows, the front strap should be close to vertical. The back strap should lie straight, just below the ear, without any slack. Straps should meet just below the hinge of the jaw, in front of the ear.

**Test the fit.** With the chin strap buckled, the helmet shouldn't move when you shake your head or push it. The helmet shouldn't roll back or forward when you push up on the front or back. If it does, tighten the straps. The chin strap should feel tight when you open your mouth.



## Bike Safety Tips

- Look behind you and use proper hand signals before turning.
- Drive on the far right side of the road, or on the shoulder where legally permitted, but leave enough pavement on your right to steer around objects in the road.
- Ride single file. If a bicycle path is provided, use it.
- Always give pedestrians the right of way.
- Check and maintain your bicycle regularly; many bicycle accidents result from faulty equipment.
- Don't carry anything that interferes with vision or control, and don't carry riders unless an attached seat is available.
- Never hitch a ride onto moving vehicles.
- Turn your headlight on if you ride at night.
- When riding after dark, wear something white or wear reflective material on your clothing.
- Watch for car doors opening and for cars pulling into traffic. For added safety, use a rear-view mirror.
- Be alert. Do not assume that you have the right of way. Make eye contact with motorists.



### *REMEMBER:*

Look for stop signs and red lights before crossing the street. Stay to the right of the road, and ride single file.

## More Rules of The Road



**T**he Bicycle Helmet Law affects our youngest bike riders and it is the newest "rule of the road" that cyclists must follow. There are, however, other rules that children and adults alike must remember and abide by when they travel the roadways by bike.

The basic traffic laws that apply to motorists apply to cyclists. That includes stopping at red lights, stop signs and before entering a roadway. Cyclists are also required by law to ride as close to the right hand edge or curb of the road as possible (with the flow of traffic). Failure to obey these basic traffic rules could result in a fine and possible jail time.

It is illegal to wear earphones plugged into a radio, cd player or other electronic device while riding a bicycle. The penalties for breaking this law are the same as for the traffic infractions mentioned above.

Any bicycle accident in which a person is killed or seriously injured must be reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles within 10 days of the occurrence. If a person is prevented, because of an injury, from notifying Motor Vehicles within this time, the report must be made immediately upon recovery.

# Biking Questions?

For information about the Bicycle Helmet laws, rules of the road and additional safe cycling measures, consumers may contact any of the following resources.

## **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

[www.nhtsa.gov/bicycles](http://www.nhtsa.gov/bicycles)  
1-888-327-4236  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
West Building  
Washington, DC 20590

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## **American National Standards Institute**

[www.ansi.org](http://www.ansi.org)  
1-212-642-4900  
25 West 43rd Street, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10036

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## **New York State Department of Transportation Children's Safety Information**

[www.dot.ny.gov/display/programs/bicycle/safety\\_laws/childrens](http://www.dot.ny.gov/display/programs/bicycle/safety_laws/childrens)  
50 Wolf Road, POD 5-4  
Albany, NY 12232

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## **New York State Department of Health**

Bureau of Injury Prevention  
[www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)  
Empire State Plaza  
Corning Tower, Room 1235  
Albany, NY 12237  
518-473-1143

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## **Just for Kids**

### **KidsHealth**

Online information for kids about bicycle safety  
[http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/bike\\_safety.html#](http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/bike_safety.html#)

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### **Safe Kids USA**

Facts, information and resources for parents and kids  
<http://www.safekids.org/safety-basics/big-kids/at-play/bike-and-wheels-safety.html>

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### **SAFE NY**

A fun bicycle safety activity sheet for kids  
[www.safenyny.gov/Kids/kid-bike.htm](http://www.safenyny.gov/Kids/kid-bike.htm)