

BICYCLE SEASON ABOUT TO BEGIN: BEWARE!

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The roads are clearing up, the weather is getting warmer, and the urge to pull those bikes out of storage is upon you. Bicycling is one of the greatest forms of recreation and a terrific sport to enjoy alone or with a group. Over the last few years, however, I have had the opportunity to represent some very skilled and careful riders who have had the misfortune of being in crashes with motor vehicles because of drivers who were not paying attention. Devastating injuries can occur to children and adults alike, and it is clear to me that if there is a collision between a car and a bicycle, the bicycle and its rider will always come out on the losing end.

Most people do not realize that a bicycle must follow the rules of the road, just as if it was a car. Most skilled bicycle riders do that, but they have an expectation that the cars on the road will honor their presence on the roadway. Failure of auto drivers to be on the lookout for other vehicles, including bicycles, has led to terrible crashes that leave the bike rider in pain, unable to work, and in some cases, with the inability to carry on life as they once knew it.

One of the classic situations that we have seen is when a bicycle rider is approaching an intersection and is planning on going straight. The rider is focused on the road in front of him, yet sees all that is within his full field of vision. The driver of the car, coming in the opposite direction, is usually waiting to make a left hand turn into a cross street. The driver waiting to cross is more focused on the auto traffic coming toward him, and once the traffic clears allowing him make a turn, he does so without even noticing that there was a bicycle coming right through the intersection. That is a recipe for disaster, and it happens all the time. The car ignores the bicyclist's entitlement to the right of way. The bicyclist is struck and knocked into the air and then onto the ground, usually after making an impression of his body or helmet on the car that struck him. Then it is off to the hospital, doctor, physical x-rays, treatment, surgery, and rehabilitation toward recovery. It is a long road back to good health.

Bicyclists wear colorful shirts or pants and helmets that are noticeable to most, but not noticeable to many who are not paying attention. Whether it is that the driver does not anticipate a bicycle, is on a cell phone, is busy texting, or is just not paying attention, behavior that puts a bicyclist, or anyone else on the road in jeopardy will only cause liability problems for the driver. Drivers must pay attention to the conditions that are in front of them on the roadway. If making a turn in front of oncoming traffic, make sure you look well in front of you at the oncoming traffic, particularly, for bicycles. An extra second or two will be worth your wait if it keeps you from striking another vehicle on the road.

Bicyclists: Wear that helmet! Wear bright colors! Follow the Rules of the Road!

Enjoy the season.