



Chatham Borough Police Department

Traffic Safety Unit



Riding a bicycle is environmentally-friendly, great exercise, and just plain fun. Unfortunately, it can also be dangerous. Bicycles are considered vehicles in New Jersey, and as such, cyclists must devote as much attention to riding a bike as they would when operating an automobile. Equally as important, motorists must allow cyclists the same respect and caution they would allow another automobile. When cyclists and motorists "share the road," we are all on our way to a safer community. Consider some safe tips for both bicyclists and motorists.

For Bicyclists:

- **Obey the Rules of the Road:** Ride straight and single file in a predictable manner. Plan ahead and allow time to maneuver around road hazards and to negotiate with traffic and open car doors. Yield to pedestrians and obey all traffic signals and signs.
- **Ride with Traffic:** Always ride on the right side. Use caution if passing other traffic on the right. When approaching an intersection, use the appropriate lane for the direction you intend to travel (left, straight, or right).
- **Signal All Turns:** Look back before you make a lane change or turn. Signal safely in advance.
- **Make Left Hand Turns Safely:** You may turn left as a vehicle by moving into the left side of the travel lane (or left turn lane) OR cross like a pedestrian by stopping, dismounting, and walking across crosswalks.
- **Be Prepared for Conditions:** When braking in the rain or snow, allow extra distance to stop and look for pavement markings and utility covers which may become slippery.
- **Be Visible – Use Lights at Night:** When riding at night, use a white headlight on front and a red reflector on the back visible from at least 500 feet. In addition, we recommend you wear bright clothing in the daytime and reflective clothing for night riding.
- **Maintain your Bike:** Check your tires, chain, and brakes before every trip. Take your bicycle to a bike shop at least once a year for a professional inspection and tune-up. Make sure your reflectors and lights are in working condition.
- **Wear a Helmet Correctly:** Helmets are required by law for anyone under 17, but everyone should wear a helmet to prevent a head injury. Your helmet should be level and snug and should not shift while riding.

For Motorists:

- **Expect Bicyclists on the Road:** Always expect to encounter a bicyclist on the road: on all types of roads, in all types of weather and at all times of the day and night. Bicyclists may be riding out in the travel lane for their own safety due to narrow roads, obstacles, or pavement hazards which you may not see. Before opening your car door, check for bicyclists who may be approaching.
- **Pass with Care, Give Bikes at Least 3 Feet:** Pass a bicyclist as you would any slow-moving vehicle. Slow down, wait until oncoming traffic is clear and allow at least 3 feet of clearance between your car and the bicyclist when passing. After passing a bicyclist, check over your shoulder to make sure you have allowed enough room before moving over. Experienced bicyclists often ride 20 to 25 mph and may be closer than you think.
- **Be Careful in Intersections:** Always assume bicyclists are traveling through an intersection unless they signal otherwise, and yield to them as you would to any other vehicle. Do not turn left or right in front of bicyclists unless you can do so safely. You can be fined and receive points if you injure a bicyclist by violating their right-of-way.
- **Watch for Children:** Children on bicycles are often unpredictable – expect the unexpected. Strictly observe speed limits in school zones and in residential areas.
- **Use Extra Caution in Bad Conditions:** In bad weather, give bicyclists extra trailing and passing room. When uncertain in any situation, slow down until it's safe to proceed.