



**Are you a bicyclist? Do your children bike? Are you a motorist?**

**If the answer is yes to any of the above, please read.**

Bicycling is a great means of transportation to reach destinations that are only a few miles away or less. Some cyclists commute to work. An upward spiral of the price of gasoline results in more bicycles being used. Bikes don't pollute or add to traffic congestion. Bicycling is an activity that children and adults enjoy for fitness, fun, even as a competitive sport.

However, there is a problem that is very obvious in Lebanon County and in our communities. Some bicyclists do not obey important Pennsylvania traffic laws, and some motorists don't know how to share the road with bicyclists. Here are some examples.

#### **Bicyclists**

1. Some bicyclists ride on the left side of the road and face oncoming vehicles. Not only is this against the law, it is very dangerous. Motorists are not expecting bicycles to be coming toward them. A motorist may be turning with a bicyclist directly in his path. Riding on the wrong side of the road, bicyclists cannot read traffic signs. Bicycles are vehicles and must ride with all other vehicles on the right side of the roadway.
2. Some bicyclists do not obey traffic signals; they believe that they have looked carefully and don't make complete stops at Stop signs and red lights before proceeding.
3. Some bicyclists do not have the legally required lights and reflectors on their bikes when bicycling at night.

#### **Motorists**

1. Some motorists turn right in front of a bicyclist who is traveling straight through the intersection. They "right hook" the bicyclist. Sometimes these motorists have not been paying adequate attention and have not even realized that there is bicyclist to their right. Others misjudge how fast a bicyclist is traveling.
2. Some motorists drive very close to bicyclists when overtaking them whether bicyclists are sharing the travel lane or on the shoulder. These motorists are not considering the possibility that the bicyclist may suddenly move to avoid a pothole or glass or hit road debris; that the motor vehicle may catch a bike's mirror or saddlebag (pannier) and cause the cyclist to crash. The draft from a fast moving vehicle may pull a bicycle into the vehicle. Sadly, a few motorists intentionally pass a bicyclist as close as possible. Bullying is very dangerous.

3. Being “doored” is another potential danger for bicyclists where vehicles are parked on a road. If a driver or passenger begins to open the door of his vehicle, the bicyclist can’t stop fast enough. If the cyclist veers into the travel lane to avoid the door, he may be struck by a vehicle.



There are many more ways that bicyclists and motorists can respect each other and make it safer and easier for both to share the roads. Educating is so important. You can help by delivering this message.

### **Bicycling Successfully**

It doesn't take a lot of time to learn how to bicycle. Children are especially excited when they no longer need training wheels on their bikes. They have a new sense of confidence. However, *a bicycle is not a toy* and just like learning to drive a car, bicyclists need to learn how to drive their bicycle skillfully and know the laws that they need to obey.

The Federal Highway Administration, Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation, the League of American Bicyclists, and other government agencies and organizations that promote bicycling safety continue to develop bicycling safety publications, tips, videos, and instructional classes to educate bicyclists. You will be amazed at the excellent resources found on the web. There is a very good reason for all of this attention: Having excellent bicycling skills, the proper equipment and knowledge will save lives, prevent injuries to bicyclists of all ages, and earn the respect of motorists.

Wearing a helmet is vitally important. Visit [www.helmets.org](http://www.helmets.org) for much information. The following abbreviated account is from this website.

*I was riding home from work on an asphalt trail ... It was sprinkling ... I wasn't going fast ... I hit something (a stick?) which kicked my front tire about two feet to the left ... The next thing I remember is another bicyclist saying something to me. I think I must have been unconscious for a minute (?) because I don't know where he came from. I got up, picked up my bike and rode the rest of the way home. I was so stunned I didn't realize how badly I had been hurt until I looked in the mirror. I went to the hospital. I had a concussion, broken cheekbone, two stitches in my eyebrow, and road rash down my left side. One doctor told me the crash helmet had saved my life. I bought a new helmet yesterday and fitted it very carefully. It's stupid but I never worried about crashing, only about being hit by cars. I thought I was safe on the trail. Wear your helmet & ride carefully. (Nov.2010)*

There are videos on YouTube that show how to fit a helmet. The version by NHTSA is excellent.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yzSwxWIJTk>

The following are resources that you can utilize to become a better bicyclist or teach your children, your students, or your friends.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (DriveSafePa) has a great brochure, “*A Bicycle is Not A Toy*,” which can be downloaded.

<http://www.drivesafepa.org/Resources/A%20Bicycle%20is%20Not%20a%20Toy.pdf>

PennDot’s Bike Safe website has interactive graphics including a Bike Driver’s Test for children, state bike laws, recommendations on how to bicycle safely.

<http://www.dot.state.pa.us/bike/web/index.htm>

Some excellent videos that can be found on the web are “Ride Smart. It’s Time to Start,” “Bike Safe, Bike Smart,” and “Bicycle Safety Tips for Adults.”

Many more resources can be found in the **Education Section** of [www.bikelebanon.org](http://www.bikelebanon.org).

If you want bicycle skills classes for your children or yourself, contact Lebanon Valley Bicycle Coalition-[president@bikelebanon.org](mailto:president@bikelebanon.org).

Bicycling legally and skillfully can provide a lifetime of pleasure and convenience.

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