



Extension FactSheet

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Bicycle Safety in Amish Country

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Bicycles Are a Way to Get There

In addition to riding in buggies, many Amish use bicycles as a means of transportation. While the use of bicycles has remained relatively constant, rural populations have increased, and tourism in Amish communities has risen. This leads to many more motorists sharing the same roads with bicyclists. Bicycle use in this case is for transportation and not for fitness or recreation. It is important to consider that when bicycles are a means of transportation, more bicycling is done in poor weather and in low-visibility situations.

Choosing the Right Bicycle

Choosing the right bicycle for safe riding is the place to start. The size of the bike and the seat adjustment should be appropriate for the size of the rider.

The bicycle should have properly adjusted brakes and a bell or other warning device that may be heard 100 feet away. Red reflectors should be mounted on the rear of the bike and in the spokes of the rear wheel. White reflectors should be mounted on the front of the bike and in the spokes of the front wheel.

During low-light situations, the bicycle should also have a white lamp visible from 500 feet to the front and a red lamp visible from 500 feet to the rear.

Bicycle Riders Need Helmets

A properly attired rider is just as important as correct bicycle equipment for decreasing the chance of injury. At all times, the rider should WEAR A HELMET. Studies at children's hospitals and the Safe Kids Coalition have shown that 85% of all head injuries could be prevented with the proper use of bicycle helmets.

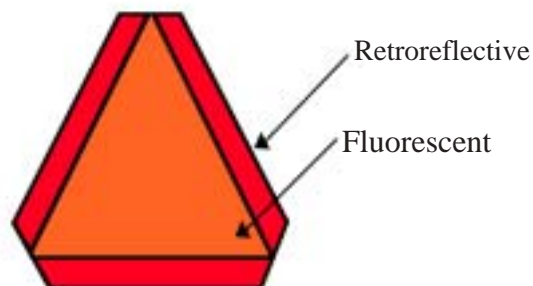
Choose a helmet that has a Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) sticker and foam pads inside the helmet to keep it snug and to prevent the helmet from moving. When wearing the

helmet, the front should be just above the eyebrows and the side straps should meet in a V directly below each ear. Do not use helmets designed for other purposes (such as sports or riding horses) as they do not offer proper protection for bicycle riders.



Wearing appropriate clothes will increase the bicyclist's visibility to motorists and make it easier for drivers of motor vehicles to recognize bicyclers on or along the roadway. Bicycle riders should wear bright and/or fluorescent and retroreflective material to make themselves more visible to motorists.

Bright and/or fluorescent material reflects surrounding light and makes the rider more visible during the daytime. An example of fluorescent material is the center triangle of a Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblem found on the back of many buggies.



Retroreflective material reflects light back to its source during low-visibility situations at night. An example of this material is the darker red border of the SMV emblem. Wearing this retro-reflective material, along with carrying a flashlight or a lantern, will help pedestrians increase their visibility to motorists who are driving at night, dusk, dawn, in the rain, and in other low-visibility conditions.

The fluorescent and retroreflective materials may be found sewn into or attached to clothing, armbands, vests, leg wraps, etc. and may come in a variety of colors. For those who make clothes, these materials should be available at local fabric stores or buggy shops.

Riding Bicycles Safely

Developing proper riding habits will reduce the chances of mishaps and assist the rider in reaching his or her destination safely. Bicyclists should ride on the right side of the road, going in the same direction as traffic, and should travel in a single-file line. Obeying all traffic laws and using hand signals with the left arm will help motorists know the riders' intentions.



Look left, right, and left again at all intersections before crossing. The first danger will come from the left, so bicyclists need to check the left first and last before moving into any intersection. Also, it helps to make eye-contact with any motorists to be sure they are aware of the rider.

Carrying Loads

Sometimes it is necessary to carry loads while riding a bicycle. Use of baskets is acceptable as long as lights and reflectors are not obstructed. Always keep at least one hand on the handlebars at all times. The load weight should be manageable and as close to the centerline of the bicycle as possible to keep in balance.

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Road Hazards

To maintain control of the bicycle, the rider needs to be alert to road hazards. Watch for these hazards and avoid them whenever possible:

- Wet leaves
- Puddles of water
- Patches of ice
- Loose gravel
- Rocks
- Broken glass and other sharp debris
- Cracks in the road
- Buggy wheel grooves in the road

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