

Bicycle and pedestrian safety a big concern in South Lake Tahoe

Submitted by [paula](#) on Thu, 06/18/2015 - 10:03pm



Safety for cyclists and pedestrians is a big concern for the South Lake Tahoe Police Department (SLTPD), cycling groups and those enjoying these activities.

In the last six years, 12 people have died in South Lake Tahoe while cycling or walking. In that same time, 42 people were injured while riding bikes on the road while 37 pedestrians were hurt.

The topic of legal rights and issues for pedestrians and cyclists was the topic of Wednesday's Tahoe Talks Brown Bag speakers series at Lake Tahoe Community College. Sgt. Shannon Laney and Sgt. Shannon Norrgard of the SLTPD said efforts are in the works to conduct traffic education in the community. Once they are able to hire more staff to hold school bike rodeos and other events to inform people of the rules of the road.

SLTPD has officers out on bikes that will be enforcing rules for cyclists. Rather than writing citations they want to just inform the riding public so accidents can be prevented. Norrgard is in charge of the department's bicycle team while Laney provides traffic supervision and code enforcement for SLTPD.

Cyclists must follow these rules (from the CA Vehicle Code 21200-21212):

1. Ride the same direction as cars.
2. Use hand signals when turning left or right.
3. It is the law that helmets are worn by riders under 18 (but adults should wear them as brain injuries are the leading cause of serious injury and death to cyclists).

4. If you intend to ride a bike on a roadway or sidewalk after dark the law requires that you use both a headlamp and reflectors as follows: a) a lamp emitting a white light visible for 300 feet in front of the bike; b) a red reflector on the rear visible from 500 feet; and c) a white or yellow reflective device on each pedal.
5. It is illegal to ride a bike under the influence of alcohol or drugs as a bicycle is a "vehicle" within the meaning of the DUI statutes.
6. Act in a reasonable manner to prevent harm to others and to themselves.
7. Bikes must have working brakes.
8. A cyclist cannot hold onto another bike or vehicle while moving on the roadway.
9. A bicyclist cannot carry any passengers unless they are under 40 pounds and in an approved seat.
10. No person operating a bicycle shall carry any package, bundle or article which prevents the operator from keeping at least one hand upon the handlebars.
11. Earbuds are not allowed in a cyclist's ears while riding in California. Nevada allows one ear to be covered.
12. Cyclists must stop at all stop signs and red lights.

Bikers and pedestrians need to take responsibility as most accidents are their fault. Darting across roadways while not in a crosswalk, cyclists riding in the wrong direction, reckless behavior.

Cyclists riding the wrong direction in the bike lanes are a cause of accidents in town. Drivers look the direction cyclists should be coming from at an intersection, not necessarily looking at the wrong direction.

After "America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride" earlier in June, organizers received some calls about the lack of safety those riding in the event showed. A common complaint was riding two or three abreast while other common issue was cyclists riding through stop signs and traffic lights and not using the bike lanes.

Not all accidents are the fault of those on bicycles however. Cars need to give them three feet of space while riding on the roadway and be aware of those sharing the roadway with them. Vehicles also need to stay out of the bike lanes and not use them for parking.

Bike paths don't have rules, yet, so it's mainly etiquette and awareness that will keep those utilizing the multiple-use paths safe. If walkers try and use the left side of the trail, then they'll see bikers coming their direction (just like walking against traffic).

Electric bikes can go almost everywhere human pedaled ones do, except on US Forest Service shared use trails.

Pedestrians account for most of the fatalities of the two groups in South Lake Tahoe. In most of those cases, people crossed the five lanes of Highway 50 while not in a proper crosswalk.

After the police officers were done, the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition presented a webinar about what other communities do for bicycle and pedestrian safety. San Francisco has "Walk First," a program that identified 265 dangerous intersections in the city and made them safer for people to use. They also "Focus on the Five," where the police department has a goal of issuing at least 50 percent of traffic citations for the five most common violations that cause pedestrian injuries.

One mistake can cause an accident or death so educate yourself and your family on how to walk and bike the right way, so mistakes are very rare.

More of the bicycle and pedestrian safety concerns will be covered during "Law Enforcement Strategies to Improve Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety," which is part two of the presentation. Sergeants Laney and Norrgard will be back to continue the discussion on Wednesday, June 24, 2015 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Aspen Room of LTCC. Everyone is invited.