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BICYCLING SAFETY

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older.



Information available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicate more than 200,000 youth aged eight through 19 were treated in hospitals for bicycling-related injuries during 2006. The most frequent types of injuries were abrasions/contusions, fractures, lacerations, and sprains/strains. The common body parts injured, in decreasing order of occurrence, were the head, wrist, knee, lower leg, and shoulder. Many of these injuries could have been prevented by taking several simple precautions when bicycling.

Pre-Use Activities

- Before using, always inspect the bicycle for damage or disrepair including examining the seat, chain, derailleur, pedals, brakes, headlight, reflectors, and tires. Assure that quick release wheels are properly tightened.
- If the bicycle fails your inspection, inform your group leader, parent, or guardian and remove it from use until it can be repaired.

Bicycling Precautions

- Always wear a properly fitted and approved bicycle helmet. Securely fasten the chin strap.
- Wear bright colored clothes when bicycling in the daytime. It is best to avoid cycling after dark, but if you must ride at night, wear reflective clothing and use a bicycle headlight and reflectors.
- Using a rear view mirror that is attached to your helmet or handlebars can improve your view of other riders, cars or pedestrians, and is a good safety practice.
- Obey all traffic laws and regulations. Use proper hand signals when turning, stopping, or changing lanes.
- Check for traffic in both directions before entering an intersection or a street from a driveway or sidewalk.
- Ride in the same direction traffic is traveling and be aware of the traffic flow around you.
- Bicycle to the right and move to the left to pass slower bicycle traffic, for left turns, or to avoid obstacles or hazards.
- Pay particular attention to parked cars to prevent riding into a door that is opened or an automobile that pulls out immediately in front of you.
- Always yield to pedestrians.
- Be alert for road hazards such as potholes, broken glass, yard clipping piles, garbage and recycling cans, railroad tracks, drainage grates, wet pavement, and dogs.
- Be careful when riding across bridges.
- Using headphones or talking on a cell phone while bicycling is considered reckless because it is distracting and interferes with the bicyclist hearing sounds that indicate imminent danger.
- If you are injured while bicycling, notify your project leader, parent, or guardian. Seek medical attention if the injury is serious.

Clover Safe #41 provides additional information about California bicycling requirements.