



NEWS



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LAW REQUIRES MOTORISTS TO GIVE BICYCLISTS THREE FEET FOR SAFETY AS NEW SCHOOL YEAR ROLLS IN

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - With children heading back to school, motorists should expect to see more children riding to and from school on their bicycles. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) would like to remind the public that on September 16, 2014, a new law affecting motorists and bicyclists takes effect.

According to the law, a driver must allow three feet of distance when overtaking or passing a bicyclist. If three feet is not available, a driver must then slow to a safe speed and pass when no danger is present.

"Motorists are reminded to pay close attention as the school year approaches and exercise caution when they see bicyclists on the road," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. "Be sure to move over or slow down to pass when you see a bicyclist on the road and help keep our roadways a safer place."

According to data from the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System, in 2012, there were 153 bicyclists killed in California, which reflects a 7 percent increase from 2011. Those deaths accounted for 5 percent of the total collision fatalities in California.

"As important as it is for vehicles to be mindful of our bicyclists, those who ride must exercise safe practices and ride smart," added Commissioner Farrow. "With both drivers and bicyclists doing their part, we can help reduce the number of tragedies involving bicyclists."

The danger surrounding motor vehicle traffic is just one aspect of a child's safe passage to and from school. According to Safekids.org, more children ages 5 to 14 are seen in emergency rooms for injuries related to bicycling than any other sport. Bicycle helmets, which are required by law for children under 18 years of age in California, can reduce the risk of severe brain injuries by 88 percent - yet only 45 percent of children 14 and under usually wear them.

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The CHP and Safekids.org offer the following traffic safety tips for bicyclists:

- "Use your head, wear a helmet." It is the single most effective safety device available to reduce head injuries and deaths from bicycle crashes.
- Tell your children to ride on the right side of the road with traffic, not against it. Stay as far to the right as safe and reasonable.
- Riding with traffic requires following the same rules as motorists. Riding on sidewalks requires looking and yielding at all crossings following pedestrian rules.
- Use appropriate hand signals and obey traffic signals, stopping at all stop signs and stoplights.
- Teach your children to make eye contact with drivers. Bicyclists should make sure drivers are paying attention and are going to stop before they cross the street.
- When riding at dusk, dawn, or in the evening, be bright and use lights - and make sure your bike has reflectors as well. It is also smart to wear clothes and accessories that have retro-reflective materials to improve bicyclist visibility to motorists.
- Actively supervise children until you are comfortable that they are responsible to ride on their own.

The mission of the California Highway Patrol is to provide the highest level of Safety, Service, and Security to the people of California.



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