

Bicycle Safety Precautions for Michigan Bike Riders

While it's the responsibility of motor vehicle operators to take great care while driving and look out for bicyclists, it's the cyclists too who are responsible for taking the proper safety precautions to safeguard their well-being. It is important to know bicycle safety precautions. To protect yourself on Michigan highways and to abide by laws that pertain to bicyclists, make the following efforts before you hop on your bike:

- Wear a helmet. There is no law demanding that citizens wear a helmet while riding a bicycle, but common sense should prevail in this situation. If you're getting on a bicycle and heading out to drive in traffic with cars and trucks and motorcycles, protect your head and potentially save yourself from a traumatic brain injury should you crash while riding your bicycle.
- Wear reflective gear. If you're going to be a cyclist who chooses to ride alongside motor vehicles, do yourself and other drivers the favor of wearing the proper gear so that you can be seen in shaded areas and especially at night. Wear reflective gear and clip-ons, or take the time to at least equip your bike with reflectors so that you don't blend into your surroundings.
- Do not use your cell phone. You need two hands to operate a bicycle. While veteran cyclists or overconfident newbies may feel completely comfortable riding their bike while using a smartphone, resist the temptation. Keep both hands on your bike, and don't allow yourself to be distracted by ear buds. If a conversation has to happen right in that moment, then signal and pull off to a safe area of the curb so you can have your conversation or send your text message or email. The best choice is to put your smartphone away until you reach your destination so you will not be tempted to check it at any point in your journey.
- Choose routes with bike lanes. When an area of the city or suburbs has designated bike lanes, use them! Bike lanes are there for your safety and to make your travels easier and far less perilous as you mix with large vehicles. Whenever possible, plan your bike route out in advance so that you can opt for routes that have clearly demarcated bike lanes.
- Do not bike while intoxicated. You are no safer on a bicycle than behind the wheel of a car if you are intoxicated. It doesn't matter how short of a distance you are riding or how few drinks you have had. If you've been drinking, call a cab. Lock up your bike for the night or ask if you can put it in the car and take it with you – just don't do any riding or driving yourself. Protect yourself and others from a potentially fatal accident.
- Practice your biking technique. Riding on a course or biking up and down the driveway or a paved bike trail is very different than merging into traffic and riding alongside motor vehicles. But you do yourself a disservice if you don't take the time to practice your riding techniques before mingling with the big guys. Spend time on trails and off of highways so that you are able to practice all of the biking rules and regulations, get used to your safety gear, and challenge yourself. The more comfortable you feel with your bike, the better and safer a rider you will be when you're on major roadways, with or without bike lanes.

Follow Michigan Biking Laws. Michigan has also instituted rules for safety that will help protect you as you bike and that every cyclist should follow if they want to blend with traffic on the roads:

- Ride your bike close to the right curb.
- Do not ride more than two bicycles side by side at any time.
- Use designated hand signals to indicate a stop, turn, or change in speed.
- Yield to pedestrians, especially if riding on the sidewalk.
- Equip your bike with appropriate lighting for nighttime riding.
- Do not ride more people on your bike than it is equipped to carry.
- Do not ride between lanes of traffic.
- Do not carry anything that prevents you from having both hands on the handlebars at all times.

