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CALIFORNIA BICYCLING REQUIREMENTS

This Clover Safe note is intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and staff.

California bicycles are regulated under the California Vehicle Code (CVC), Sections 21200 through 21212. The CVC is enforced by the California Highway Patrol and county sheriff and local police departments. This Clover Safe summarizes information about the rules-of-the-road for bicycle equipment and riders in California. Clover Safe #42 provides further information about bicycling safety.



Summary of California Bicycling Requirements

Section 21201. (a) Bicycles shall be equipped with a brake wheel which, when applied, will skid on dry, level, clean pavement.

(b) Bicycle handlebars shall not be raised so that the operator must elevate their hands above the level of their shoulders.

(c) Bicycles shall be of a size so the operator can safely stop the bicycle, support it in an upright position with at least one foot on the ground, and restart it in a safe manner.

(d) Bicycles ridden during darkness shall be equipped (1) with a white front light which is visible from a distance of 300 feet in front and from the sides of the bicycle; (2) with a red rear reflector visible from a distance of 500 feet to the rear; (3) with a white or yellow reflector on each pedal visible from the front and rear of the bicycle from a distance of 200 feet; and (4) with a white or yellow reflector on each side forward of the center of the bicycle, and with a white or red reflector on each side to the rear of the center of the bicycle, except that bicycles which are equipped with reflectorized tires on the front and the rear need not be equipped with these side reflectors.

Sections 21202 and 21208. (a) Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway or in a bike lane at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic moving in the same direction shall ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway except when (1) overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction; (2) preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway; (3) when reasonably necessary to avoid conditions (including, but not limited to, fixed or moving objects, vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, animals, surface hazards, or substandard width lanes) that make it unsafe to continue along the right-hand curb or edge; and (4) when approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.

(b) Any person operating a bicycle where highway carries traffic in one direction only and has two or more marked traffic lanes, may ride as near the left-hand curb or edge of that roadway as practicable.

Section 21203. No person riding upon any bicycle shall attach the bike or themselves to any streetcar or vehicle on the roadway.

Section 21204. (a) Bicyclists shall ride upon or astride a permanent and regular bicycle seat.

(b) No person shall ride as a passenger other than upon or astride a separate seat. If the passenger is four years of age or younger, or weighs 40 pounds or less, the seat shall have adequate provision for retaining the passenger in place and for protecting the passenger from the moving parts of the bicycle.

Section 21205. No bicyclist shall carry any package, bundle or article which prevents keeping at least one hand upon the handlebars.

Section 21210. A bicycle shall not be left lying on its side on any sidewalk or parked on a sidewalk in any other position so that there is not an adequate path for pedestrian traffic.

Section 21211. (a) No person may stop, stand, sit, or loiter upon any public or private bicycle path or trail, if the stopping, standing, sitting, or loitering impedes or blocks the normal and reasonable movement of any bicyclist.

(b) No person may place or park any bicycle, vehicle, or any other object upon any bikeway or bicycle path or trail which impedes or blocks the normal and reasonable movement of any bicyclist unless the placement or parking is necessary for safe operation or is otherwise in compliance with the law.

Section 21212. (a) A person under 18 years of age shall not operate nor ride upon a bicycle as a passenger, upon a street, bikeway, or any other public bicycle path or trail unless that person is wearing a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet that meets the standards of either the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) or the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), or standards subsequently established by those entities. This requirement also applies to a person who rides upon a bicycle while in a restraining seat that is attached to the bicycle or in a trailer towed by the bicycle.