



Winter 2008

## Bike Safety

In recent months, Oregon has been plagued with bicycle injuries and deaths, many resulting from motor vehicle collisions. In a recent article from Willamette Week, they stated, "It's been a bad year for Portland Cyclists. Six have died in 2007."

With that statement in mind, it's odd that Portland is ranked high among many states with being 'bike friendly.' The Oregon Department of Transportation in 2006 updated the Oregon Bicyclists Manual, talking in depth about four principles that riders can take when going out to protect themselves.

The Oregon Bicyclist Manual discusses the four principles that bicyclists can do when on the road to protect themselves and others. These principles are; maintaining control of your bicycle; ride on the right, with traffic, in a predictable manner; be visible and ride alertly; and protect yourself. This will help Oregonians who ride their bikes, get their safely.

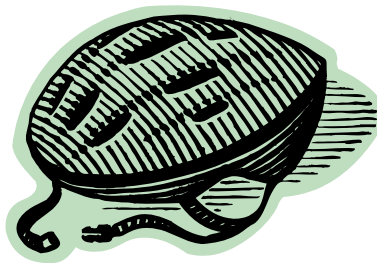
The manual discusses key points about maintaining control of your bicycle, such as being sure that your bike is the right size and adjusted properly. When you have a bike that is the correct size you will have more control of it and you will be more comfortable when riding. You should always make sure that your bike is in proper working condition, the best way to do that is by checking it regularly. Something else that is important to know when riding your bike, maintaining control of your bike also means that you do not ride while intoxicated. The same Oregon rules apply for bicyclists when riding while intoxicated.

The second principle, riding with traffic is important so that vehicles can predict where you will be. If all bicyclists are riding on the right side, in the same direction as traffic, cars will know where to expect you and you will know where the car is. Remember to always use proper hand signaling when turning so that cars know where you are going. Even though you are riding in a bike lane, you still need to be riding with traffic!

Principle three states that you should be visible

and ride alertly. Yellow and lime green are the most effective colors to wear when riding in the dark. Another way to make yourself more visible is by using lights and reflectors on your bike as well as using a reflective vest or other materials. When riding your bike, always be prepared to stop suddenly or to take immediate action.

The last principle is protecting yourself when riding your bike. There are many ways to protect yourselves but the most effective way to protect yourself is by wearing a helmet at all times when riding. Oregon law is that all bicycle riders under the age of sixteen are required to wear a helmet while riding on a public way.



However, even though the law pertains only to those under the age of sixteen, no matter what age we are, our brain is still a vital organ in our body that should be protected at all times. The brain can not heal itself

like breaking a bone, and this is true no matter what age you may be.

A brain injury occurs every 16 seconds and a death from a brain injury occurs every 12 seconds. And one out of 80 children born this year is expected to die of a vehicular- induced brain injury, probably before their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Don't become a statistic; ride safely and responsibly at all times.

For more information on the Oregon Bicyclist Manual please visit, [http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/BIKEPED/docs/bike\\_maunal\\_06.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/BIKEPED/docs/bike_maunal_06.pdf)

### Sources:

1. Oregon Bicyclists Manual, Oregon Department of Transportation, 2006
2. Willamette Weekly, 2007
3. Center for Disease and Control (CDC), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why do we wear helmets?**

Wearing a bike helmet reduces the risk of brain injury by up to 88 percent, and reduces the risk of injury to the face by 65 percent.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Center for Disease Control, 1991

### **Are there different helmets?**

Depending on which activity you are planning on doing, there may be a different helmet. Be sure that you have the appropriate helmet.

### **If I crash with my helmet on, can I use it again?**

Once you have crashed, you should throw away the helmet and get a new one. Many times there can be damage to the helmet that you can not see. If the helmet is damaged and you fall again, it will not protect your head like it was intended to do.



### **How do I fit the helmet properly?**

You want to be sure that there is no more than 2 fingers of space from the top of the eyebrow to the helmet. The straps form a snug 'V' shape under the ears. Lastly, there should only be room between the chin and the chin strap to fit 2 fingers. If you can fit more, it needs to be tightened. After fitting the helmet, you can see if everything is adjusted by moving the helmet front to back and side to side, if the helmet is moving with the head then you have successfully fitted the helmet!

### **I've done all of those steps and the helmet still is not fitting properly. What do I do?**

If you have done all of the above steps to fit the helmet and it still is not fitting correctly, you may have to add the extra foam padding that is included with the helmet. Then re-fit the helmet. If it is still not fitting properly, you may have to find a different size.

## Testimonial from a ThinkFirst– Oregon VIP (Voices for Injury Prevention)

Brain and spinal-cord injuries do not play favorites. They can affect the young or the old, the rich or the poor, men or women, the famous or the ordinary citizen. Occupation does not matter.

The effects of these injuries do not care who you or where you are in life. They can ruin lives; they can change futures; they can tear families apart. The victim cannot choose the outcome.

The human brain and spinal cord are unique because the brain and spinal cord do not regenerate. Once an injury to either of these systems occurs there is no “fix;” there is no “cure”.

The only way to prevent the life-long effects of these injuries is through education about the causes and the effects of these injuries.

Acquiring knowledge about the real effects of these injuries from a ThinkFirst Injury Prevention team is one of the best means of prevention. Having a ThinkFirst VIP (Voices for Injury Prevention) present his or her story can often be very dramatic and can possibly prevent a similar injury from claiming another victim. ThinkFirst for Teens involves a school curriculum segment AND a presentation by a ThinkFirst Injury Prevention team which consists of an

OHSU staff member giving the statistics followed by a true life testimonial given by a brain or spinal-cord injury survivor. When I graduated high school in Arizona in 1982 this type of education was not offered. Sure, I knew of brain injuries. Sure, I knew of spinal-cord injuries. But I also “knew” that they always happened to the other guy. Like every other high school student or recent college graduate, I was invincible. I knew such an injury would not happen to me. I knew I could not be minimized to a statistic. I continued to have that false sense of security until I became the victim of a very serious brain injury in 1988 and almost died. This realization did not come to me suddenly, though. It is a realization that has taken almost 20 years since my injury. Maybe I am still not able, or willing, to grasp the full magnitude of my injury to this day.

Maybe I never will grasp it.

OHSU’s ThinkFirst for Teens program is a comprehensive program that disseminates the medical and personal information to prevent another victim from suffering the irreparable damage that results from a brain or spinal cord injury. Think-First for Teens focuses on prevention in the very formative early adult years. I recommend OHSU’s ThinkFirst for Teens program to any school that wants to educate young people about the life-long effects of brain and spinal cord injuries and to ThinkFirst before acting.

### BRENT YONKOVICH

*“I believe that driving should not be a requirement for a person to live, work, and play.”*

Brent was assaulted outside a nightclub in San Diego in 1988 and sustained a traumatic brain injury at age 24. Prior to his injury he graduated from the Arizona State University School of Engineering in 1987 and was employed as a Mechanical Engineer in Tempe, AZ. He was planning to attend the Penn State University School of Engineering in August 1988. Since his injury, Brent has received a Master’s of Public Administration degree from Arizona State University. He moved to Portland in May of 2002 specifically for the public transportation system. He spends his time volunteering with his service dog Sheba at the Central Library, Trinity Episcopal Church Adult Day Care, and speaking with ThinkFirst. Brent recently enrolled in classes at Portland State University to study urban planning. He is also a member of Toastmasters, always trying to improve his speaking skills.



ThinkFirst depends on YOU! Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to help sustain the efforts of ThinkFirst Oregon. Send your check to:

**ThinkFirst Oregon, OHSU  
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Rd., L603  
Portland, OR 97239-3098**

You may also visit [www.ohsu.edu/thinkfirst](http://www.ohsu.edu/thinkfirst) and click on “Make a donation.” If you are mailing a check please designate “ThinkFirst” in the Memo section of your check.

***Thank you!***

# THINKFIRST OREGON PROGRAMS

*MISSION: To reduce the incidence of brain and spinal cord injuries and fatalities in Oregon by providing age-appropriate injury prevention education to youth in kindergarten through 12th grade.*

**ThinkFirst for Kids**— An integrated six-week safety curriculum for grades 1-3, featuring the animated super safety hero “Street Smart.” Areas covered include pedestrian, bike, and vehicle safety; recreation and water safety; and violence and conflict resolution.

**ThinkFirst for Big Kids**— A six-week curriculum for grades 4-7 that uses a variety of literature and classroom exercises to address risk taking, conflict resolution, drinking and driving, and bike safety.

**ThinkFirst for Teens**— A six-week curriculum for grades 8-12. The program offers in-class injury prevention exercises along with a classroom visit by an injured speaker/educator. The program addresses a variety of risks teens are faced with today and aids in building decision-making and coping skills.

**FAST**— A workbook for children in kindergarten through fifth grade and their parents/guardians. Together, families learn about pedestrian safety, bicycle safety, and occupant protection through indoor activities and outdoor, on-the-road training.

For more information about ThinkFirst Oregon programs or to request curriculum for your school please contact the ThinkFirst offices at 503-494-7801 or email us at [thnkfrst@ohsu.edu](mailto:thnkfrst@ohsu.edu).

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