

League of American Bicyclists Position on the Use of protective equipment

The League of American Bicyclists reiterates its longstanding position encouraging bicyclists to wear helmets and strongly recommends the wearing of helmets that (a) are properly fitted to the rider and (b) meet the bicycle helmet standards of either the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the American Society of Testing and Materials, or the Snell Memorial Foundation.

The League recommends that cyclists frequently check their helmets for wear and damage, and replace the helmets every few years and/or in the event of a crash, in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations.

The League recommends that all of its affiliated bicycle clubs encourage their members and other bicyclists who participate in club rides to wear such helmets.

A child carrier or trailer to transport a small (non-pedaling) child as a passenger should include a retention device and protection against the child's being injured by the moving parts of the bicycle or trailer. In order to foster innovation in such equipment, any restrictions on the minimum age and weight of children who may be transported using such equipment should be written into product instructions and warnings, not into laws.

In states retaining the rule of contributory negligence, protective equipment laws should include a provision to the effect that failure to use such equipment shall not be admissible as evidence of negligence in a court of law.

Background

Controlled studies have shown that a rider not wearing a helmet is between two and three times more likely to suffer a head injury in a crash than is a helmet wearer. The League has encouraged the wearing of helmets via its publications and its education program for many years. Since 1991 the League has required participants in League-sponsored events to wear helmets.

Surveys have shown that 75% to 81% of League members always wear helmets when they ride, and another 9 to 13% wear them most of the time.

Helmets are safety devices which prevent or mitigate head injuries in a crash or fall, not substitutes for education which is aimed at the prevention of crashes and falls.

Properly-designed child carriers (child seats, trailers, etc) make bicycling practical for family transportation, and innovation in such products should be encouraged.

(Approved by the Board of Directors, December 1985 and amended July, 1990, December, 1990, November 2000 and March 2005)