

## League Position on Bicycle Registration

When done properly, bicycle registration can be an effective tool to recover stolen bicycles and deter theft. It can also assist in the identification of crash victims, especially in the case of children who often carry no identification. Where registration is widespread, the practice can assist law enforcement, bicycle coordinators, and other officials in the management of large numbers of bicycles. For example, being able to readily verify bicycle ownership can expedite the removal and return of bicycles that appear abandoned or are parked illegally.

The League of American Bicyclists supports effective bicycle registration programs that do not impose a significant financial or statutory disincentive to bicycling.

Any registration fees should be dedicated to the costs of establishing and maintaining the registration program or to other programs or facility improvements that directly benefit cyclists.

Mandatory bicycle registration should be imposed only where the benefits of and/or necessity for such ordinances are demonstrable and where the penalties for violation are minimal.

Ideally, an effective bicycle registration program includes the following elements:

- Statewide, as opposed to local programs as exemplified by registration programs in Minnesota, Hawaii and California.
- Establishment and maintenance of a statewide database of bicycle registration data.
- Uniform, standardized registration practices and procedures statewide.
- Properly trained personnel who can accurately record the required information, especially serial numbers.
- Use of a serially-numbered license sticker or marking, which serves as an additional identification number.
- Participation by local law enforcement including a commitment to treat bicycle theft equally with other property crimes.

Several commercial, for-profit bicycle registration companies have appeared in recent years. All take advantage of the Internet to provide web-based registration services. While the League recognizes the convenience of on-line registration and that such enterprises may offer the only opportunity for registration in many parts of the country which lack local or state programs, bicycle owners should be cautioned about the pitfalls of "do-it-yourself" registration.

The key to any bicycle registration and theft recovery program is the accurate recording of the bicycle serial number. However, lack of any industry standards for serial-number placement has resulted in a hodgepodge of numbering systems that in many cases practically ensure that the untrained bicycle owner will record the wrong number. Many manufacturers have two or more different sets of numbers on each frame—only one of which is the unique serial number. Other manufacturers put the numbers in unusual or impossible-to-read locations, e.g. under components attached to the frame after the number has been stamped. Many serial numbers are so poorly applied that they are difficult or impossible to read. In short, only people who are properly trained or work with and/or register a wide variety of bicycles regularly are likely to be consistent in correctly recording serial numbers. And the key to any theft recovery program is accurate serial number reporting. Any registration program that makes the bicycle owner solely responsible for recording this information is negligent and only marginally effective.

A new, permanent, engraved marking may serve as an alternative to an unreadable serial number, but may cause structural weakness if located in a vulnerable location on the bicycle, and is not at all suitable for use with certain types of bicycle frame materials (e.g., graphite fiber composite materials). Any such marking must be applied only by a skilled operator and with the full consent of the bicycle owner.

(Adopted by the Board of Directors, August, 2001; revised March 2005)