

Be Safe Out There!  
By Dean Schott  
Outreach Director  
League of Illinois Bicyclists

The headlines have not been good for bicyclists this spring in Illinois. The recent rash of bicycle fatalities has us all alarmed about our safety on the roads.

My words of advice for bicyclists are twofold: Obey the traffic laws and expect the unexpected from motorists.

Some of us consider stop signs and traffic lights nuisances which can be ignored. Besides it being the law, bicyclists should stop at signs so that they can see oncoming traffic and the traffic can see us before proceeding safely through an intersection.

While stopped recently at a red light, a motorist pulled up beside me and thanked me for observing the traffic signal. As bicyclists, we need to display good behavior on the roadway because it is noticed and appreciated by others.

When riding in groups, bicyclists should not ride three or more abreast, blocking traffic, which can fuel the road rage of motorists. In heavy traffic, cyclists should ride in single file to let motorists pass safely and avoid bottlenecks.

Bicyclists need to communicate with motorists by using hand signals for left and right turns and when slowing and stopping. It makes us all more predictable for motorists.

Another way to help ensure our safety is to be defensive riders, always on the alert to what motorists may do. On a recent ride, a car passed me, then turned on the left turn signal and came to a stop at the intersection. As I approached from the rear, the driver suddenly decided to make a right turn instead.

If I had tried to pass her on the right side, there would have been a good chance that I would have been struck by the car.

Pay attention out there, observe the traffic laws, and you'll be much safer. You can't control what the other guy might do, but you can control what you do.

And heed the advice of an old-timer: "I ride so that I can ride another day."