



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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Resource document **OFF DUTY** *Biking Basics*

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Narrative:

As most of America begins to thaw out after a long, cold winter, bicycle enthusiasts are undoubtedly gearing up and ready to hit the road.

Each May, organizations across America observe National Bike Month in an effort to raise awareness of bicycle safety and their target audience aren't just riders.

Annually, hundreds of cyclists are killed and tens of thousands more are injured in preventable crashes, according to information provided on AAA's website.

Head injuries are the most serious type of injury and the most common cause of death for bicyclists.

Bicycle helmets have proven to reduce the risk of head and brain injury when a crash occurs by as much as 85 to 88 percent.

Soldiers are being injured and even killed in bicycle-related accidents. Since fiscal 2011, over 100 Soldiers injured and two killed in these types of accidents. It's important that Soldiers realize there are dangers associated with riding and take precautions to protect themselves.

Reflective clothing and situational awareness has are imperatives when biking. But you can't stop there; never assume other motorists will see you. You need to bike defensively and keep your head on a swivel.

With the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reporting distracted driving an epidemic on America's road ways – in 2012, 3,328 were killed in distracted driving crashes – incorporating risk management into a bicycle ride could be a life or death decision.

At the end of the day, it's about showing common courtesy and respect and by doing so, we can ensure the two-way street is a safe street for everyone.

Key Messages:

- Hitting the roads on a bike can provide a workout with an added convenience of leaving from the front door. However, cyclists must stay vigilant and aware of their surroundings, and be on constant lookout for dangers, whether on the road or on the trail.
- Bicycling, whether on or off-road, carries with it risk of injury and death. Like any sports or recreational activity, riders must know their limits and remain within their abilities.
- Wearing a bike helmet is the single greatest thing a cyclist can do to keep from sustaining a serious head injury.
- It may be a good idea to brush up on riding skills and rules if it's been a while since you've cycled.

Talking points:

- Soldiers, civilians and their Family members who cycle must not be complacent about their safety, especially while biking.
- Biking is an excellent alternative to running as it results in less trauma on the back and leg joints. Bicycling is the second most popular outdoor activity in the U.S. and across the Army; the cycling community continues to expand.
- Not only are wearing bicycle helmets a recommendation by cycling experts, wearing them are mandatory when riding on a U.S. military installation.
- Bicyclists should be alert and watch for both turning and parked motor vehicles.
- If all bicyclists wore helmets, one life could be saved every day; one head injury could be prevented every four minutes.

Tips:

AAA has launched a 'Share the Road' campaign in an attempt to educate both riders and motorists. Their comprehensive initiative offers posters, video public service announcements and other informative resources. AAA wants motorists and bicyclists alike to know the facts. Here is some information from the campaign:

Bicycles are a legitimate form of transportation and bicyclists are legal drivers of vehicles, with laws and regulations established for their use. Yet many bicyclists feel they are not respected by motorists and must fight for their place on the road. Like motorists, cyclists need space to safely operate in traffic. This requires mutual respect, which can be promoted by public information, motorist education programs and legal measures.

- Did you know bicyclists can ride on all roads, except where restricted? Bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as motorists, including the right to ride in the traffic lane.
- It is illegal and unsafe for bicyclists to ride against (or facing) traffic. Bicyclists should ride on the road, and must ride in the same direction as traffic.
- Motorists must maintain at least three feet of clearance when passing a bicyclist.

- When a road is too narrow for cars and bikes to ride safely side by side, bicycles should take the travel lane, which means riding in or near the center of the lane.
- Bicyclists must obey all traffic controls, signs and signals. It's the law.
- In most states, a bicycle is considered a "vehicle" (like cars, trucks and motorcycles). All bike riders must obey the same laws as drivers of other vehicles.
- Many pedestrian crossings are marked with signs saying, "Yield to Pedestrians," reminding motorists that pedestrians have the right-of-way. However, motorists (including bicyclists) must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks even if they're not marked.
- The biggest difference between motorists and bicyclists as road users is that bicyclists are less visible, quieter and don't have a crumple zone to protect them.

To learn more, visit the 'Share the Road' campaign page at <http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/bicycle-safety/>. Remember ... same roads, same rules, same rights.

Historical Reference:

<https://safety.army.mil/>

<http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/bicycle-safety/>

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Bicycles>

<http://www.bhsi.org/mandator.htm>

<http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/bikeinjuries.html>

<https://safety.army.mil/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=3HKHWnU2-0A%3d&tabid=651>

Statistics:

Since fiscal 2011, over 100 Soldiers have been injured and two killed in bicycle-related accidents.

Annually, hundreds of cyclists are killed and tens of thousands more are injured in preventable crashes.

According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, in 2011, 677 pedalcyclists were killed and an additional 48,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes. The number of pedalcyclists killed in 2011 is nine percent higher than the 623 killed in 2010.