

NEWS RELEASE

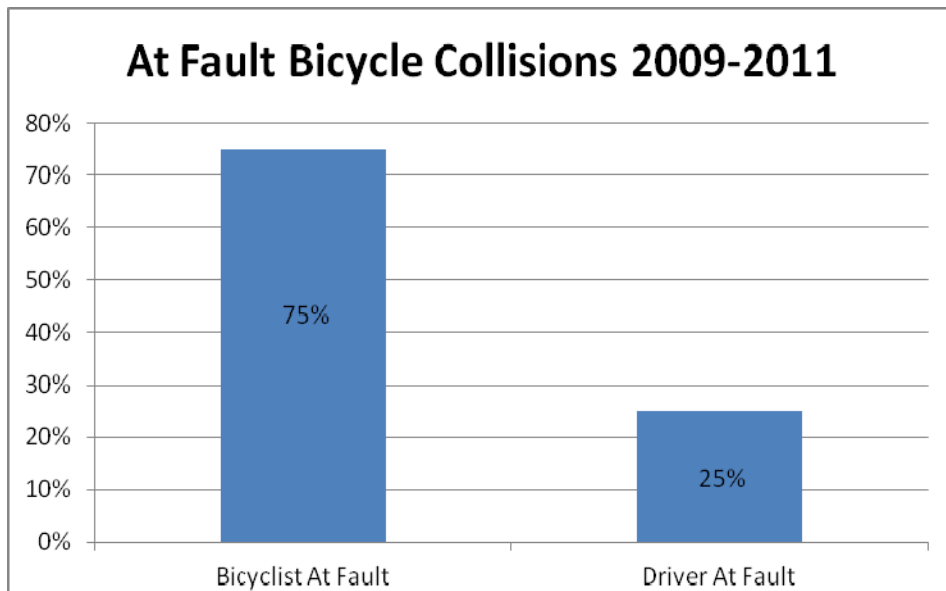
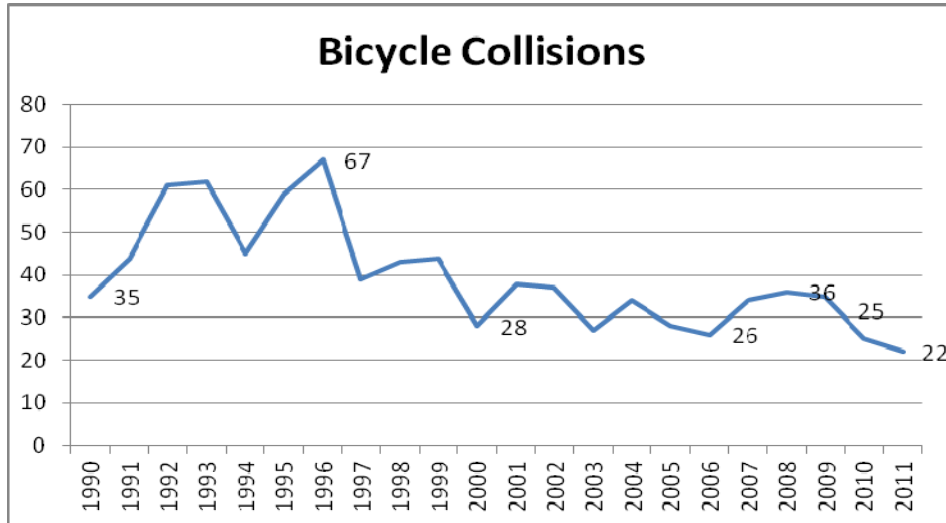
For Immediate Release/Broadcast

Thursday, January 26, 2012

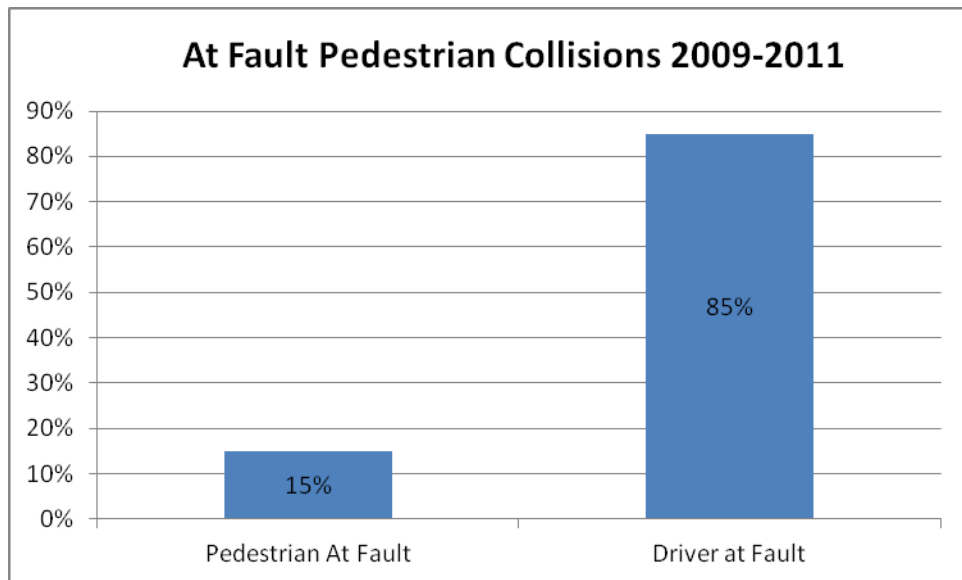
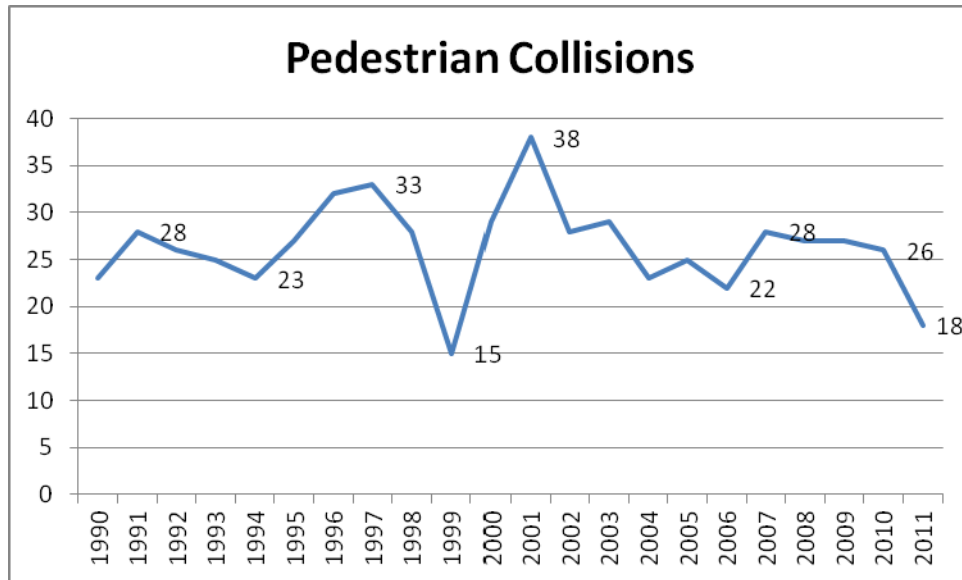
Petaluma Police Target Bicycle and Pedestrian Violations This Friday

On Friday, January 27, 2012, between 7am and 5pm, Traffic Officers will be on the lookout for bicycle and pedestrian violations to try and reduce collisions between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles.

The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) 2009 Bicycle Collision Rankings for the City of Petaluma show Petaluma ranked 8th out of 104 cities by daily miles traveled and population. These rankings are the most up to date rankings available from OTS. 1st out of 104 is the worst ranking and 104 out of 104 is the best ranking. For bicyclists under 15 years of age, Petaluma is ranked the 2nd worst city by daily miles traveled and 3rd worst by population. Although bicycle collisions have been on a downward trend, the rankings indicate we still have a significant bicycle collision problem.



The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) 2009 Pedestrian Collision Rankings for the City of Petaluma show Petaluma ranked 30th out of 104 cities by daily miles traveled and population. For pedestrians under 15 years of age, Petaluma is ranked the 45th worst city by daily miles traveled and 58th worst by population out of 104 comparable cities. For Pedestrians 65 years of age and older Petaluma is ranked 54th out of 104 by daily miles traveled, and 58th out of 104 by population. Although pedestrian collisions have been on a downward trend, the rankings indicate we still have a significant pedestrian collision problem.



For additional information on bicycle and pedestrian safety, please read the following pages. Funding for this traffic safety operation has been made possible by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Bicyclists:

The Petaluma Police Department encourages bicycle riders to use the following four basic safety tips:

1. Maintain control of your bicycle.
2. Protect yourself—reduce the risk of head injury by always wearing a helmet.
3. Be visible, alert, and communicate your intentions.
4. Ride with traffic.

Maintain Control of Your Bicycle

There are many things you can do to control your bicycle, even in an emergency. First, ensure your bicycle is the right size and properly adjusted to fit you. A properly fitted bicycle is easier to control, more comfortable, and causes less fatigue. A bicycle shop can help you choose the correct size bicycle. Ensure your bicycle is in good working order by inspecting it regularly.

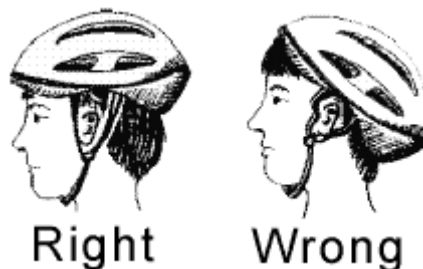
The California Vehicle Code (VC) contains specific laws pertaining to bicycle riders. For example, it is unlawful to operate a bicycle while under the influence of an alcoholic beverage or drug (CVC §21200.5).

Convictions are punishable by a fine of up to \$250. If you are under 21, but over 13 years of age, your driving privilege will be suspended or delayed for one year once you are eligible to drive.

Protect Yourself

Even a simple fall can cause a life threatening head injury. The brain is fragile and often does not heal the way that broken bones can. The damage can stay with you for life. Properly fitted helmets provide protection. By law, bicycle riders under 18 years of age must wear a bicycle helmet while riding on a public road (CVC §21212).

Wear your helmet correctly!

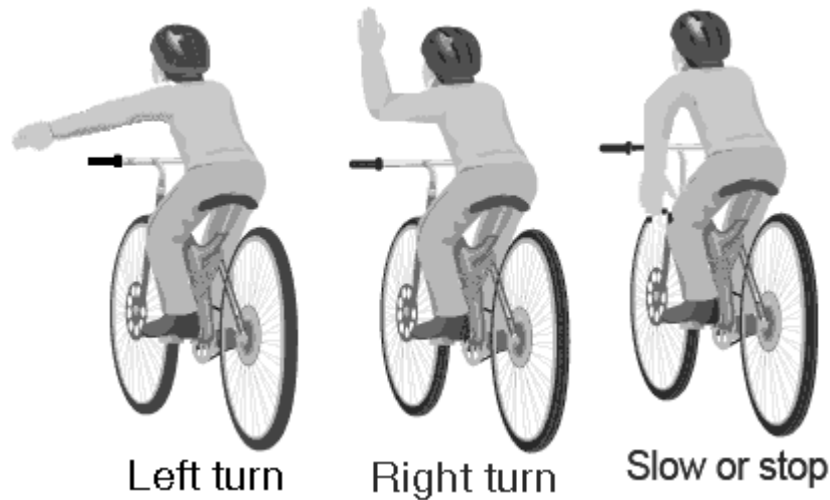


Be Visible and Alert

Even if you obey all traffic laws, there is always a risk of being hit by a motorist who is not obeying the laws, or who simply does not see you. Ride carefully—vehicles waiting at stop signs, in driveways, or parking spaces may suddenly pull out in front of you. Watch for vehicles that have just passed you and may turn right, as well as vehicles coming the opposite way that may turn left in front of you. **Be prepared to stop or take evasive action.**

Use hand signals before making turns or changing lanes to warn traffic around you. To signal a left turn, look behind you, over your left shoulder, and then extend your left arm out. To signal a right turn, hold your left arm up with your elbow bent (you may also hold your right arm straight and point to the right). You do not have to

keep your arm extended while completing the maneuver always have at least one hand on the handlebars to maintain control. To signal that you are slowing or stopping, extend your left arm down.



Using lights and reflectors at night is the law (CVC §21201). During darkness, bicyclists **must** have the following equipment:

- A front lamp emitting a white light visible from a distance of 300 feet.
- A rear red reflector visible from a distance of 500 feet.
- A white or yellow reflector on each pedal or on the bicyclist's shoes or ankles visible from a distance of 200 feet.
- A brake which will enable the operator to make one braked wheel stop on dry, level, clean pavement.

Increase your visibility by wearing light or bright colored clothes, such as yellow or lime green. Red appears black in fading light and is not a good choice for riding in the evening. Mirrors provide opportunities for increased awareness of your surroundings, but use mirrors only as an aid. Always look over your shoulder to make sure the lane is clear before turning or changing lanes. Make sure your brakes are in good working order.

Ride With Traffic

Ride in the same direction as traffic. This will make you more visible to drivers entering roads or changing lanes, because they will know where to look for possible conflicts. On a one-way street, you may ride on the left as long as you are riding with traffic.

How Far to the Right?

Ride on the right, but not so far that you might hit the curb. You could lose your balance and fall into traffic. Do not ride too far to the right:

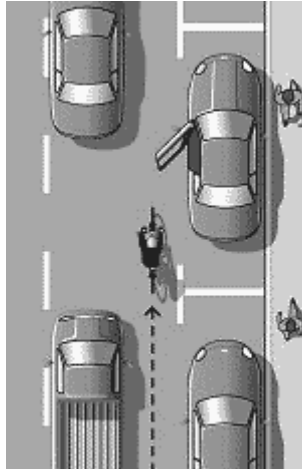
- When avoiding parked vehicles or road hazards.
- When a traffic lane is too narrow for a bicycle and vehicle to travel safely side by side.
- When making a left turn so that vehicles going straight do not collide into you.
- To avoid conflicts with right-turning vehicles.

Hazards

Keep your eyes on the road ahead. Avoid running over potholes, gravel, broken glass, drainage grates, puddles you can't see through, or other unsafe road conditions. Look over your shoulder to avoid swerving suddenly into traffic. When possible, signal before changing lanes.

Parked Vehicles

Bicyclists should ride far enough away from parked vehicles to avoid being hit by an opening door.



When to Take the Traffic Lane

A bicycle lane is a designated traffic lane for bicyclists, marked by a solid white line, typically breaking into a dotted line at the corner. Different from a simple white line showing the edge of the road, a bicycle lane follows specific width requirements and is clearly marked as a bike lane. Many roads do not have designated bicycle traffic lanes, so bicyclists will share the traffic lane to the left of the white line. If there is no shoulder or bicycle lane and the traffic lane is narrow, ride closer to the center of the lane. This will prevent motorists from passing you when there is not enough room. Bicyclists can travel at speeds of 20 mph, or faster. You should also use the traffic lane when you are traveling at the same speed as the traffic around you. This will keep you out of motorists' blind spots and reduce conflicts with right-turning traffic.

Motorists Passing Bicyclists

Be patient when passing a bicyclist. Slow down and pass only when it is safe. Do not squeeze the bicyclist off the road. If road conditions and space permit, allow clearance of at least three feet when passing a bicyclist.

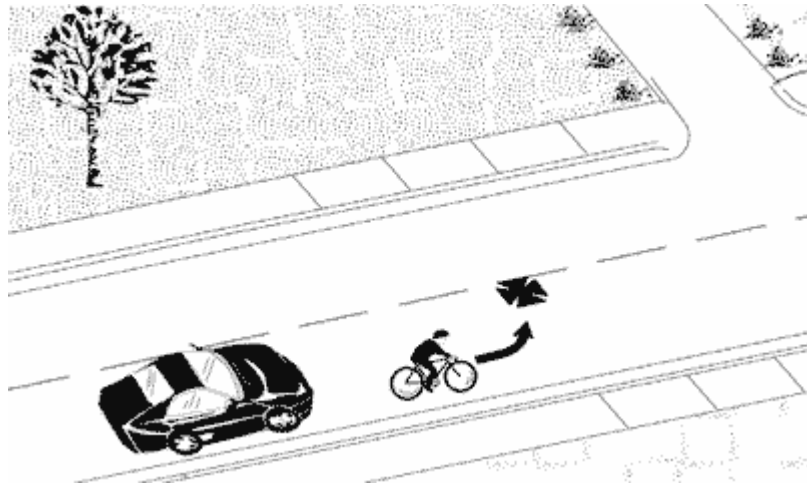
Obey Traffic Signs and Signals

Bicyclists **must** obey STOP signs and red signal lights. It's a good idea to stop for yellow lights too—rushing through a yellow light may not leave you enough time to make it across the intersection before the light changes.

Left Turns

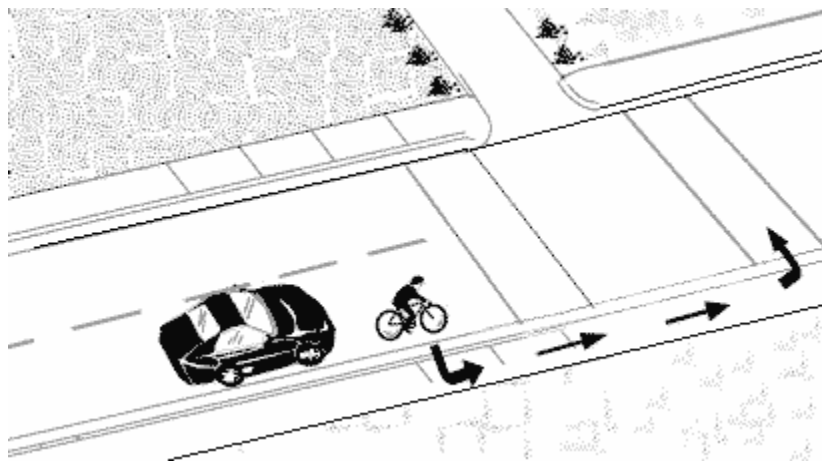
There are two proper methods for making a left turn on a bicycle:

1. Using Traffic Lanes



As you approach the intersection, look over your left shoulder for traffic. If clear, signal your turn and move over to the left side of the lane, or into the left or center turn lane. Position yourself so that vehicles going straight cannot pass you on your left while you are making your left hand turn. Yield to oncoming traffic before turning. If you are riding in a bicycle lane, or on a multilane road, you need to look and signal each time you change lanes. Never make a left turn from the right side of the road, even if you're in a bicycle lane.

2. Using Crosswalks



Approach the intersection staying on the right. Stop and either cross as a pedestrian in the crosswalk, or make a 90 degree left turn and proceed as if you were coming from the right. If there is a signal light, wait for the green or WALK signal before crossing. Yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Pedestrians

The Petaluma Police Department considers Pedestrian safety is a serious issue. A pedestrian is a person on foot or who uses a conveyance such as roller skates, skateboard, etc., other than a bicycle. A pedestrian can also be a person with a disability using a tricycle, quadricycle, or wheelchair for transportation.

In California, pedestrian deaths occur in approximately 19 percent of all traffic fatalities. Drive cautiously when pedestrians are near because they may suddenly cross your path.

Pedestrians may be at risk walking near hybrid and electric vehicles because these vehicles are virtually silent while operating. Use extra caution when driving near pedestrians.

- **Respect** the right-of-way of pedestrians. Always stop for any pedestrian crossing at corners or other crosswalks, even if the crosswalk is in the middle of the block, at corners with or without traffic lights, whether or not the crosswalks are marked by painted lines.
- Do not pass a vehicle that has stopped at a crosswalk. A pedestrian you cannot see may be crossing the street. Stop, then proceed when all pedestrians have crossed the street.
- Do not drive on a sidewalk, except to cross it to enter or exit a driveway or alley. When crossing, yield to all pedestrians.
- Do not stop in a crosswalk. You will place pedestrians in danger.
- Remember, if a pedestrian makes eye contact with you, he or she is ready to cross the street. Yield to the pedestrian.
- Allow older pedestrians, disabled pedestrians and pedestrians with young children sufficient time to cross the street.

Important: Blind pedestrians rely on the sound of your vehicle to become aware of your vehicle's presence; so, it is important that you stop your vehicle within 5 feet of the crosswalk. Drivers of hybrid or electric vehicles must remain especially aware that the lack of engine noise may cause a blind pedestrian to assume there is not a vehicle nearby. Follow this cue:

- When a blind person pulls in his or her cane and steps away from the intersection, this gesture usually means for you to go.

Pedestrians Who Are Blind

Pedestrians using guide dogs or white canes with or without a red tip must be given the right-of-way at all times. These pedestrians are partially or totally blind.

When these pedestrians are in your vicinity, be especially careful when turning corners or backing up, particularly if you are driving a quiet hybrid vehicle.

Here are some suggestions for helping pedestrians who are blind:

- At a stop light or sign, do not stop your vehicle more than 5 feet from the crosswalk, unless there is an advance stop bar (line). A blind pedestrian uses the sound of your engine as a guide; so drive up to the crosswalk to allow the person to hear you.
Important: Drivers of electric and hybrid vehicles must be extra alert to blind pedestrians, as they may be unaware of your presence due to the nearly silent nature of these vehicles.
- Stop at all crosswalks where pedestrians are waiting. Wait for the pedestrian to cross the street.
- Do not stop in the middle of a crosswalk. This forces the blind pedestrian to go around your vehicle and into traffic outside of the crosswalk.
- Do not give the blind pedestrian verbal directions. A blind pedestrian listens to all traffic sounds before deciding to cross the street.
- Do not wait too long for the blind pedestrian to cross the street. When a blind person pulls in his or her cane and steps away from the intersection, this gesture usually means for you to go.
- Do not turn right without looking first. Look for any pedestrians, especially blind pedestrians or traffic, before starting your turn. Blind pedestrians who have a green light are not expecting a driver to make a right turn in front of them. Turning may result in the blind pedestrian becoming disoriented and vulnerable to being hit by another right turning vehicle when attempting to cross the street.

- Do not honk your horn at a blind person. The blind person has no idea who you are honking at and may be startled by the noise.
- Do not block any sidewalk.

Crosswalks

A crosswalk is the part of the roadway set aside for pedestrian traffic. Most intersections have a pedestrian crosswalk whether or not lines are painted on the street. Most crosswalks are located at corners, but they can also be located in the middle of the block. Before turning a corner, watch for people about to cross the street.

Pedestrians have the right-of-way in marked or unmarked crosswalks.

Crosswalks are often marked with white lines. Yellow crosswalk lines may be painted at school crossings. Most often, crosswalks in residential areas are not marked.

Some crosswalks have flashing lights to warn you that pedestrians may be crossing. Look for pedestrians and be prepared to stop, whether or not the lights are flashing.

You tube video that highlights the importance of safe bicycle operation and pedestrian safety:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O48_Ui_EZag&feature=related

Prepared By: **Sergeant Ken Savano**
Petaluma Police Department
Special Operations – Traffic Unit
707.481.3567 mobile
707.778.4596 office
OTS Projects PT20748 and AL20749

###