

## Know the Rules to Cycle Safely

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WASHINGTON – As the relatively mild summer continues throughout the region, more commuters are using pedal power for transportation and recreation.

With more cyclists and motorists sharing the roads and streets, knowing and obeying traffic laws becomes a key to safety for everyone, particularly in the congested streets of Washington, D.C. and urban areas throughout Naval District Washington (NDW).

"To keep safe, it is important to have a bike in top condition and to pay attention to some basic but very important cycling requirements when sharing your ride with the general traffic," said George Revoir Jr., Naval Support Activity (NSA) Washington safety installation program director, in a recent spring safety message on cycling.

Revoir urged riders to perform regular maintenance checks on their bicycles to ensure proper tire inflation, brake and chain operation, and lighting or reflector checks.

While Washington, D.C. and Maryland require all riders under age 16 to wear a helmet, Navy policy requires all active-duty personnel to wear helmets when riding, both on and off installations.

Cyclists are also required to have a steady or flashing white light on the front of the bike or on the helmet that is visible for 500 feet, as well as a steady or flashing red light, or reflector, on the rear of the bike visible from 600 feet.

### Knowing the Traffic Laws

Cyclists riding on public streets and roads are treated as normal traffic, and are expected to follow all the same laws as motorists, including obeying traffic signals. The Washington, D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR), Title 18, provides a full listing of appropriate laws for cyclists and motorists.

When passing cyclists, drivers should leave at least three to four feet of space between their vehicle and the cyclist, and may not make any turns that impede a cyclist proceeding straight. Many "right hook" collisions occur when a car passes a cyclist and immediately turns right onto a side street.

When traffic is stopped at a light, cyclists may legally pass stopped or slow traffic either in the same lane as the traffic, or in an adjacent lane such as a curb lane, according to Title 18, Section 1201.3, when it can be done safely. One key precaution to take when riding in the left of the curb lane, however, is watching out for "dooring," when a driver opens his or her vehicle door into the path of a cyclist.

While cyclists are generally encouraged to ride to the right side of a lane, Title 18 does not require them to do so if the



As more commuters choose to ride bicycles to work and for recreation, knowing and following the rules of the road becomes important for cyclists to safely share the road with drivers, especially in congested traffic areas such as Washington, D.C. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kathleen A. Gorby)

lane is under 11 feet wide and the rider is attempting to avoid doors, potholes or other hazardous conditions.

Within the Capital, cycling on the sidewalk is illegal within the Central Business District, roughly enclosed by Massachusetts Avenue to the north, 23rd Street to the west, D Street to the south, and 2nd Street to the east, except on National Park Service grounds such as the National Mall. When biking on walkways in those areas or outside the Central Business District, riders must yield to pedestrians.

### Travel Options

Whether commuting to and from work or riding recreationally, the metro area offers a number of options for cyclists desiring routes out of traffic. In recent years, the number of dedicated bike lanes has been increasing within the city, along with designating some lanes of streets as bus and bicycle only lanes. Parking is not permitted in bike lanes, and riders should call 311 to report blocked cycling lanes.

The area also hosts a number of trails stretching out of the city and into Maryland and Virginia, including Rock Creek Park Trail, Mount Vernon Trail, the C & O Canal Path, and the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail. Bicycles are not permitted on the Washington Navy Yard portion of the riverwalk trail.

### Stay Visible

Jim Ganz, safety manager at NSA Bethesda, said the most important aspects of choosing to ride a bicycle are being visible and using common sense, regardless of whether one is bound by laws or Navy policies.

"My advice for anybody, whether you're civilian or military, if the Navy traffic safety instructions say you shouldn't do this on an installation because it's not safe, you probably shouldn't do it off base," Ganz said, adding that precautions such as helmets and reflectors are minor inconveniences at best.

For a complete listing of D.C. traffic regulations, bicycling maps, and to download a copy of the "Pocket Guide to DC Bike Laws," visit [www.ddot.dc.gov/pages/bicycles-and-pedestrians](http://www.ddot.dc.gov/pages/bicycles-and-pedestrians). For more information on Navy safety tips and policies, visit [safetycenter.navy.mil](http://safetycenter.navy.mil).