

# BICYCLE COMMUTER'S HANDBOOK

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## **Acknowledgements**

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# 1. WHY BICYCLE COMMUTE

## INTRODUCTION:

Congratulations on your decision to try bicycling to work! Chances are you have received this booklet because your employer has decided to promote bicycle commuting as a transportation option. That means your employer cares about your health and the health of the community. Whether you plan on bicycle commuting every day, a couple of times per week, or only occasionally, you'll be doing your part to cut down congestion and make the Fox Valley a better place to work and live. And there are plenty of benefits to you, as well!

## BICYCLING'S BENEFITS:

**Improve Health and Fitness.** Like any form of regular, aerobic exercise, bicycling improves personal fitness, enhances energy levels, reduces stress, and stimulates the immune system. Bicycle commuting is a great way to build regular exercise into a busy, but often sedentary, work routine. Bicycling is a moderate, low impact exercise which can be continued throughout life.

**Save Money.** Add up what you spend driving to work every day. Bicycle commuting saves you parking fees, fuel costs, and maintenance costs. Don't forget that the largest costs of automobile ownership are paid up front: insurance and car payments. Insurance premiums usually are lower when you do not use your car for commuting to work. You might be able to save as much as 25 percent of your income if you can replace a second car with a bicycle. A new bicycle would pay for itself in a few months.

**Avoid Congestion.** Ever find yourself sitting in traffic, wishing you were somewhere else? On a bicycle, you can travel on secondary roads and paths, often arriving in less time than if you'd driven through rush-hour traffic! And you can usually park your bicycle quickly and close to your destination.

## SOME TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

The following pages will provide you with lots of valuable information about bicycle commuting. You'll learn how to fit, equip, park and lock your bicycle, what to wear, and how to find a route and get to work safely using effective cycling techniques. For those already addicted to fair-weather bicycling, information on bicycling at night and in inclement weather is also included. First, though, a few general tips to get you started:

**Check out your bike and yourself,** especially if you haven't bicycled in a while. Take it slow at first if you're not used to moderate exercise. Look over your bike for loose or broken parts, and make sure there's enough air in the tires (see page 3 for more about bike maintenance).

**Take a few shakedown rides** to get used to your bike and riding in traffic. Do this at a time when you are not in a hurry so you can stop if you need to, or check out different routes (more on biking in traffic, page 6).

**Choose your route carefully.** The best way to get someplace by bicycle may not be the way you normally drive. Get a Madison Bicycle map to help you find recommended routes. Try a few different routes to see how they compare (more about route finding on page 6).

**Figure out where you'll park.** Find out from your employer ahead of time if there are bicycle parking facilities on the premises, or look around to find your best parking options (read Parking and Locking Basics on page 8).

**Plan your wardrobe.** What facilities are available at work for storing work clothes? For freshening up? Will you ride to work in your work clothes, or will you change once you get there? Will you carry your work clothes with you every day or store them at the office? (More on dressing for success: page 5) If you've decided to give bicycle commuting a try, then obviously your first order of business is to get on a bike and start making the pedals go 'round. Whether your vehicle of choice is a one-speed cruiser or a full-suspension mountain bike, the following tips will help you adjust and maintain your bike to ensure a safer, more comfortable ride.

## 2. YOUR BIKE

### DOES YOUR BIKE FIT?

Your bike's most important safety feature is you: If you're not comfortable, you're more likely to ride poorly. Getting exactly the right fit depends on many things including your height, weight, and riding style. You should contact your neighborhood bicycle store to help you find the right fit. Consider these points:

**Frame Size:** If your bike's frame is too tall, too short, or too long, it will be very hard to adjust other things to make you comfortable. You might need a new bike.

**To Check the Height:** If your bike has a men's frame (with a tube across the top), stand with the bike between your legs, just in front of the seat. Measure the space between the top tube and your crotch. For road or street riding, a one-inch to three-inch space is safest. If your bike has no top tube (a women's frame), ask your bicycle store's staff to size you.

**Frame Length:** If, when you ride, you feel overly stretched or have pain in your neck, shoulders, or back, your frame might be too long. Try moving the seat and handlebars closer together. Also, some people, including many women, have torsos shorter than what most bikes are made for. If you're one of them, look into a shorter handlebar stem extension, a taller stem, different handlebars, or a custom bike made for people with smaller torsos.

### FIT AND MAINTENANCE CHECK

**Seat Height:** A seat that's too low will strain your knees, and achilles tendons while a seat that's too high will make it hard for you to pedal and to put your foot onto the ground. Here are some ways to get the right seat height for most riding:

- Sit on your bike and push one pedal all the way down. Put the ball of your foot on the pedal. If your seat's high enough, your knee should be slightly bent.
- If your hips rock from side to side when you pedal, your seat's too high.
- Don't raise your seat so high that less than two inches of your seat post extends into the frame.

**Handlebars:** After you've set your seat height, set your handlebars so you feel comfortable. Some things to guide you:

- Start by raising or lowering your handlebars so they block your view of the front axle when you're sitting on your bike with your hands on the handlebars. In this position, your elbows should be slightly bent (not locked).
- Lower-back pain often means the handlebars are too far away, while upper-arm or shoulder fatigue often means the handlebars are too close to you. Try raising or lowering the handlebars, or moving your seat forward or backward. You can also change to a shorter or longer handlebar stem.
- Don't raise your handlebars so high that less than two inches of your handlebar stem extends into the frame. If you have to raise your handlebars higher than the safe limit, get a longer stem.
- Rotate your handlebars so that they put even pressure across the palms of your hands without bending your wrists in a strange way.

**Seat Tilt:** Many cyclists keep their seats level. Many women, however, tilt them nose-down, and many men tilt them nose-up. Try different angles until you feel comfortable.

**Saddle Soreness:** If you haven't bicycled in a while, you may be sore at first. Chafing or soreness should go away with time. If it doesn't, the first thing to check is the seat adjustment. If adjustment doesn't help, try alternatives: a gel-filled saddle or saddle pad; a wider or differently-shaped saddle; one with springs; or one made specifically for women. Many bicycle stores will exchange saddles if they're not damaged, so try alternatives until you're comfortable. Special padded bicycling shorts can also help.

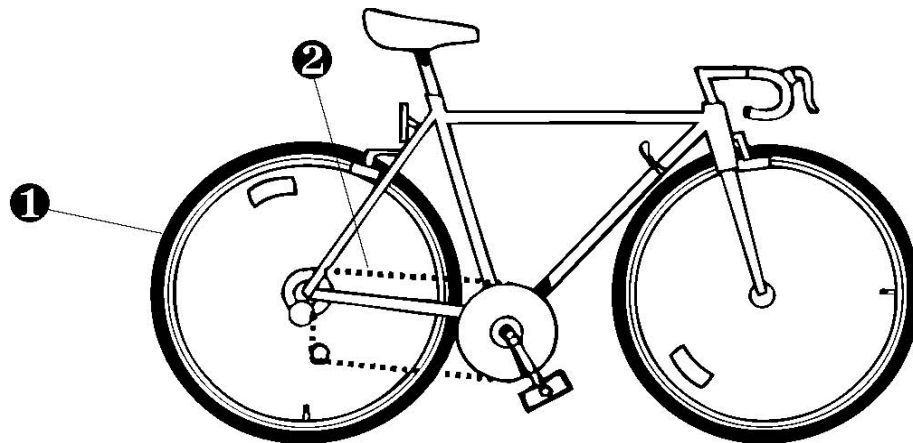
### QUICK MAINTENANCE CHECK

Whether you use your bike a lot or you're dusting off an old bike, you should get in the habit of checking the following at the beginning of every ride to make sure your commute will be safe and free from mechanical hassles. While these checks help you find problems, we don't have room to tell you how to fix them all. If you need help, go to your owner's manual, a maintenance book, or a bike shop.

**Air:** Tires lose a little air every day. If your gauge says a tire is more than five pounds under the recommended pressure (printed on the side of the tire), add air.

**Chain:** A dry chain can skip, lock up, or break suddenly. If your chain squeaks or hangs up, lubricate it. Oil will do, but it attracts dirt; a greaseless chain lubricant is cleaner, but make sure you lube often, especially after riding in the rain. To lubricate:

- a. Grab the bottom of the chain loosely with a lint-free rag. With the other hand turn the pedals backward, sliding the chain through the rag. Pedal the chain around twice to remove surface grime.
- b. With one hand squeeze or spray lubricant onto the chain, and with the other hand pedal the chain backward so it goes completely around once.
- c. Repeat step (a) to get the excess lubricant off the chain. Extra lube can attract dirt.



**Wheel Spin:** Lift each wheel up and give it a slow spin. (Spin the back wheel forward so the pedals don't move.) Check that it doesn't rub against the brake pads, frame, or something else. If the wheel doesn't spin freely but isn't rubbing, the problem might be inside the axle.

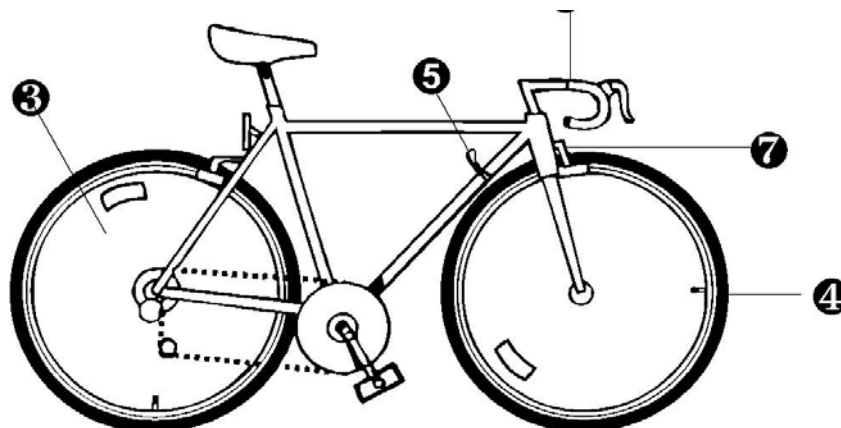
**Tires:** Turn each wheel very slowly and look for big cuts, bulges, bubbles, or places you can see the inner casing. If you spot any, replace the tire. Remove glass or other debris. Make sure the tire is seated evenly on the rim. If the valve stem doesn't point straight at the middle of the wheel, the rim might cut it; let the air out and straighten the valve.

**Shifting:** Try all of your gears, shifting each gear lever from high to low. You have a problem if the lever sticks, you can't shift to all gears, the chain rubs the derailleur, or the chain jumps off the gears. These are usually caused by worn or dirty cables, or a derailleur that needs cleaning or adjustment.

**Handlebars:** Hold the front tire between your legs and try to turn the handlebars. If they're loose, tighten the stem bolt.

**Brakes:** You should have your brakes adjusted or replaced if you have any of these problems: (a) You apply the brake on each wheel, and one or both brake pads don't touch the rim. (b) You can squeeze your brake lever all the way to the handlebars. (c) On each wheel, the brake can't stop the tire from moving on dry, clean pavement.

**Loose Parts:** Pick up the bike and shake it hard. Check and fix anything that rattles.



### 3. YOUR STUFF

Aside from a bike, what sort of equipment do you need to start bicycle commuting? What should you wear? How will you look fresh and get dressed for work? Read on for answers to these questions.

#### BASIC EQUIPMENT

A few simple pieces of equipment can help make your commute a whole lot easier- and safer. Here's what we recommend:

**A Carrying Rack or Basket** is essential for carrying items such as clothes, briefcases, books, etc. Panniers (saddlebags for bicycles), bungee cords, folding wire baskets and plastic milk crates can all help you increase your carrying capacity.

**Flat Prevention:** Everyone gets a flat eventually. Keeping your tires properly inflated and using high quality tires or tire liners can help prevent flats, but still, it's best to carry a spare tube or patch kit, tire-removal levers and a frame-fit pump, and to know how to use them. Any basic bike repair manual or class should cover this most essential of bicycle repair skills.

**Fenders** will help keep you clean and dry. Even if it's not raining you can get dirty from mud and moisture on the road.

**Lights** are a must if you are going to be riding at dawn, dusk or after dark. You are required by law to use a white light in front and a red rear reflector. Red strobe lights are also quite effective and popular. For more on night riding, see page 9.

**Lock:** Don't wait to get a bike stolen before you get a decent lock. In general, the more expensive your bike, the more you'll want to spend on a lock to keep it. For more on locks and parking, see page 8.

#### ALL ABOUT BIKE HELMETS

Besides your bike, a helmet that fits is your most important piece of bicycle commuting equipment.

**Why should you wear a helmet?** It's a fact: About 1,000 American bicyclists die in crashes each year and around three-fourths die from head injuries. Hundreds more suffer permanent brain damage. Many of these are experienced, careful riders maybe just like you. And most of these head injuries can be prevented with bike helmets.

**Helmet basics:** Most helmets on the market today are called hard shell helmets. These have a thin plastic surface, which will skid across rough surfaces. The shell also keeps the helmet's core (the soft foam part) from getting scratched, nicked or punctured. If you have a crash and your helmet takes an impact, replace it right away. An impact usually damages a helmet's foam core, meaning it won't protect you again. You should also replace your helmet at least every five years, because its foam core becomes brittle.

#### What to look for in helmets:

**Rating:** Look on the inside of the helmet. You should see a sticker from one of the following organizations meaning the helmet is designed to meet stringent crash safety standards:

The Snell Foundation

The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), F1447 certification.

**Fit:** You **must** have a good fit. A snug fit means that if your head hits more than once, the helmet stays in place. Most brands of adult helmets come in two or three sizes, and you make them fit by adjusting the chin strap and putting foam pads around the inside.

If the helmet fails these, adjust the straps, put in bigger pads, or try another size or brand.

Don't wear your helmet tilted back. It won't protect your skull in a frontal impact.

**Cost:** Good Snell- or ASTM-rated bike helmets start at about \$30. Hard shells cost a little more than soft. More costly helmets usually aren't much safer, but have better ventilation and weigh less. Buy your helmet based on **fit**.

**Ventilation:** A helmet's ventilation depends on front-to-back airflow. Good airflow comes from long, wide air vents, and air passages (or troughs) between the vents.

**Weight:** Cheaper helmets usually aren't much heavier than expensive ones, and most cyclists don't notice a difference. If you think you need an ultra-light helmet, test-ride a regular one to make sure.

## **DRESS FOR SUCCESS**

Most commuters place a high emphasis on starting their workday clean, fresh and dressed appropriately for their jobs. For bicycle commuters, this may involve some advance planning, but most feel that the mental clarity and relaxation that comes from starting their work day on a bicycle is worth the extra effort. Does your company have casual dress days? These might be the perfect days to start biking to work!

Basically, you can handle the appropriate dress issue in three ways:

**Ride in your work clothes.** Depending on the weather and the length of your commute, you may be able to simply wear your work clothes on your bike. You don't have to arrive at work all sweaty; just ride at a relaxed pace, avoid over-exertion and let the cool morning air refresh you.

### **Tips for riding in work clothes**

- Pants wearers: use an ankle strap or tuck your pants into your sock on the right side so they don't get greasy or caught in the chain.
- If you wear a skirt, make sure it is full enough to allow you to pedal but not so full it might catch in the chain. Or wear a short skirt with bicycle shorts underneath.
- Footwear: You need flat, comfortable shoes for bicycling. Consider carrying dress shoes with you, or storing them at work.

### **Wear cycling clothes and carry your work clothes.**

For longer, more strenuous commutes or more extreme temperatures, it can be more practical to change once you get to work. Rolling work clothes, rather than folding them, will help to minimize wrinkles.

**Store a week's worth of clothing at the office.** What about driving in one day a week or on the weekend and bringing a few changes of clothing along with you? Talk to your employer if you need hooks, closet or drawer space for storing clothing.

### **Tips for riding in cycling clothes**

- Wear, and carry, layers of clothing, including a lightweight, windproof outer layer. By adding or subtracting layers, you can keep your body temperature constant, and adjust to changes in the weather.
- As a general rule, start your ride fairly cool. You will warm up quickly once you get going. If you dress so that you are warm before you even start riding, you will get too hot. Specialized clothing, such as padded cycling shorts and gloves, can increase your comfort level on longer rides, but are not absolutely necessary.
- Wear bright clothing so motorists will notice you.

## **CLEANING UP AT WORK**

Do you truly need a shower after cycling to work? Many bicycle commuters find that a quick sponge bath is all they need to feel refreshed, especially if they ride to work early in the morning. Here are a few tips for freshening up:

Allow yourself a few minutes of cool-down time before changing.

Keep a towel and washcloth in your desk or locker at work. Sponge off with cold water in the washroom.

Use talcum powder to help absorb moisture and odors.

If you truly need a shower, check with your employer or building manager to see what your options are. They may be willing to make arrangements with a local health club, or install a shower themselves when they realize there's a demand.

## **4. GETTING THERE SAFELY**

Many would-be bicycle commuters are reluctant to use their bikes for getting to work because they don't feel safe. Keep in mind that the number one cause of accidental death in the United States is car accidents.

What's more, there is a lot you can do to increase your safety while bicycling.

This section is designed to help you find a safe and enjoyable route to and from work, and to learn how to ride safely and predictably. Please read it with care.

## **ROUTE PLANNING**

When you drive, you probably take the same route to work every day, and it is most likely the one used by all the other cars going your way. This may not be the best bike route, but **don't let that discourage you!**

There are often parallel streets that go through residential and lightly traveled commercial districts; using these will make bicycling both more enjoyable and safer.

Look at your route to work on a local map. Are there suggested routes already marked from your home to your destination? You may be surprised at how easy the ride is!

If you see gaps in the suggested routes or do not see a route that is direct enough, try going out on the weekend or after work for an exploration. A leisurely ride through a new neighborhood will reveal alternate roads that may be perfect for your commute. Make sure to mark your map so you can remember those new discoveries!

Try alternate routes. You may find a route you like better or one that will allow you to do some errands during your ride.

Ask other bicyclists how they get from point A to point B; bicyclists love to share their knowledge of good rides and routes.

Plan where you will cross busy roads or other obstacles. Look for bike lanes, paths, traffic signals, or over- and underpasses, that will allow you to connect two parts of your route.

Don't assume that a road must be clear of traffic to be bikable. Bicyclists are operators of vehicles under Wisconsin State law, and can legally ride on all roads except limited access highways. A short stretch on a less desirable road may be all that is needed to get you between two easy pieces of your commute.

Get a bike buddy to ride with you so that you feel safer or are encouraged to ride. Go out on weekends or after work or have someone in your company or neighborhood ride with you on your daily commute.

The more comfortable you are riding in traffic, the more routes you will have available to you. Practice your safety skills and riding habits when you are not in a hurry so you will be ready to use them when needed.

## **TRAFFIC BASICS**

Remember that you are the operator of a vehicle. Act like it. You have the same rights AND the same responsibilities as you would if you were operating a car. Here are a few basics to keep in mind:

**Obey all traffic laws, signs and signals just as you would if you were driving a car.** Obeying the law is your first defense against crashes, and is the best way to gain respect from other road users.

**Be predictable.** Signal your turns; stop as required by law; use the correct lane; communicate with other road users so they'll know what you're doing and where you're going.

**Be Visible.** Wear bright colors in the daytime; use reflective materials and lights at night. Don't hide from traffic. The words "I didn't see him" appear on accident reports too often.

**Ride in the direction of traffic only.** Motorists in intersections and driveways do not expect you to be coming the wrong way on the road. In addition, you have less time to maneuver in traffic, and your chances of having a head-on crash are much greater. Wrong-way riding is also illegal, even in bike lanes.

**Follow the Three Foot Rule:** By law, drivers must give you three feet clearance, and you must give them the same distance. Don't ride between lines of cars. Ride at least 3 feet from parked cars to avoid being hit by a suddenly opened car door.

**Scan the road ahead.** At intersections, watch for turning cars and pedestrians. Mid-block, watch for cars pulling out of driveways, alleys and parking spaces. Yield the right of way to pedestrians in crosswalks.

**Cross railroad tracks, storm grates or pavement cracks as close to a right angle as possible.** Your wheel can get caught and dump you on your head. Check behind you, then swing out slightly into the lane if you need to cross at a better angle.

**Bicycling on sidewalks is permitted, except where buildings abut the sidewalk.** Pedestrians always have the right of way on sidewalks and in crosswalks. Give an audible warning before passing pedestrians, and pass with care. Ride slowly on sidewalks or walk your bike if there are many pedestrians.

**If you ride on the sidewalk, slow down at crosswalks.**

A pedestrian travels much slower than a bike, and drivers expect people in crosswalks to act like pedestrians.

## LANE POSITIONING

Wisconsin law requires that you must ride as far to the right as is practicable. This does not mean as far to the right as possible.

**Stay far enough away from the curb to avoid hazards.** You are safer riding in a lane of traffic than in the gutter. You need room to maneuver if a pothole, bottle, or other debris appears in your path. And you are more visible when you ride where drivers expect to see a vehicle.

**Ride where cars on side streets and driveways can see you.** If you ride too far to the right, you may be blocked from their view by a parked car. You are also more visible to cars behind you if you are in the line of traffic.

**Do not weave in and out between parked cars.** Drivers behind you may not see you, and you may be cut off if you cannot get out from behind a parked car due to heavy traffic.

**Stay at least three feet away from parked cars.** Someone may suddenly open a door in front of you.

**Take the lane.** When it is too narrow to safely share with cars, when approaching an intersection, or when traveling at the same speed as traffic, ride further out into the lane so that you don't get squeezed into a dangerous situation.

**In extra wide lanes:** (one and a half cars wide) don't ride all the way to the right. Again, you will be more visible if you ride three to four feet to the right of traffic. Right turning cars and motorists pulling out of side streets and driveways will also be more likely to see you.

## TURNS AND OTHER MANEUVERS

The key to safety is predictability. For the most part, you want to turn, pass and change lanes just as you would in your car.

**To change lanes, look behind you for traffic and signal first.** Traffic in the lane you want to move into has the right of way. Look back and wait for an opening in traffic before moving over. Start looking for an opportunity to get in the correct lane at least 1 block before the intersection.

**Use the correct lane for your destination.** Go straight in a through lane, not a right turn only lane. Other drivers expect all the vehicles in that lane to be turning right. Make left turns from the left lane, if there is one, or the left side of the through lane.

**Signal your lane changes and turns.** Let drivers and other cyclists know what to expect.

**Left Turns:** For bicyclists, there are two legal options:

(1) Look back for traffic, signal, and move to the left turn lane or left side of lane. (2) If traffic is very heavy or you feel uncomfortable crossing many lanes to turn left, cross to the other side of the intersection as if you were continuing straight and pull out of traffic. Wait for the light to change again and then continue straight to your destination as if you had come from the street to the right.

**Going straight through intersections:** If you are in an extra wide right lane or there is likely to be significant traffic going right, discourage cars from passing you on the left and turning in front of you. Move toward the center or left of the straight-ahead lane as you approach the intersection.

**Pass cars and busses on the left, with at least three feet of clearance.** That is where other vehicles expect faster traffic to be. Passing on the right could get you squeezed against the curb if the car or bus pulls over, opens its doors or makes a right turn.

**Let other bicyclists know you are going to pass them.** Give an audible warning and pass with enough clearance.

### Remember these tips to help avoid a crash

- Ride in the direction of traffic only. This includes on-road bike lanes.
- Obey traffic signals, and don't run stop signs. Watch for cars turning into your path without yielding.
- Watch for cars pulling out of driveways or side streets.
- Cross railroad tracks, storm grates or pavement cracks as close to a right angle as possible.
- Check behind and around you before changing lanes or turning.
- Signal your turns.
- Let other bicyclists know you are going to pass them.

## **DEFENSIVE RIDING:**

Be aware of what is going on around you, and watch for other's mistakes. Some common situations to watch for include:

- a motorist coming towards you who turns left in front of you;
- a motorist passing you and then turning right in front of you;
- a motorist pulling out from a stop sign, driveway, or parking space without yielding to you.

**Make eye contact** if possible so that you know the motorist has seen you.

## **WHAT TO DO AFTER A TRAFFIC COLLISION**

- If you're hurt in a traffic collision, don't ride away or shake off what seems like a minor injury. You might find later that it's worse than you thought.
- If you're a victim of, or a witness to a traffic collision, here are the steps to take:
  1. Call the police. If needed, get medical help immediately.
  2. Get the following information from every vehicle: driver name, address, phone number, driver's license number, license plate number, make of car, insurance company name and policy number.
  3. Get the names and phone numbers of witnesses.
  4. Get the police report number from police on the scene.
  5. Write down how the crash happened while it's fresh in your memory.
  6. Keep (or photograph) any damaged clothes or equipment.

Also, if you're a victim:

- Don't get mad at the scene. Keep a level head so you can ask questions and take notes.
- If you're injured, don't move unless you're sure you won't injure yourself more.

## **5. STOWING IT**

The first rule: Never, never leave your bike unlocked even if you're leaving it for only half a minute. A thief can grab your bike in seconds. Some parking basics:

**Security:** Lock your bike to something that's permanent and not easy for a thief to take. Lock to a bicycle rack, a parking meter, or metal fence post. Don't lock to another bike, a door handle, or small tree. Depending on building security and the value of your bike, you may even want to lock it if you park it inside.

**Visibility:** Park in open areas where many people pass by and your bicycle can be seen easily. Thieves usually don't like an audience.

**Proximity:** Put your bike where you can get to it fast. Thieves like to steal bikes whose owners are far away.

## **WHAT LOCKING HARDWARE SHOULD YOU USE?**

**U Locks:** Make sure you buy a strong steel-alloy lock. If the manufacturer offers a warranty or insurance, register the lock and write down the lock's serial number and when you bought it. For added protection, get one or more U-lock cuffs (such as Bad Bones); they can keep thieves from using a lever to pry open your lock. One drawback to U locks: you can't lock up to thick objects such as street lights; for these, carry a thick cable.

**Padlocks & Chains:** The thicker, the better; chain links and lock clasps should be at least 3/8 of an inch thick. Look for locks and chains that are case-hardened, a process that makes them harder to cut.

**Cables:** Some cables are actually harder to cut than chains, because they don't snap and thieves can't pry them open. Use a cable at least 3/8 of an inch thick with a lock as thick, or thicker.

## **HOW TO LOCK UP:**

You can discourage many thieves if you follow these tips for locking your bike:

**Lock the Whole Bike:** Never lock through your wheel without locking the frame, because thieves can remove your wheel and steal the rest of the bike.

You should put your chain, cable, or U locks through your frame and wheel(s). If you have a quick-release front hub, you might want to take it off and lock it with the rear wheel and frame.

**Cross Locking:** A good way to foil thieves is to use more than one kind of lock. For example, put a U lock through your frame and rear tire, and put a cable or chain through your frame and front tire.

**Placing the Lock:** Thieves may break a lock by putting it against a wall or sidewalk and smashing it with a hammer. If you use a padlock, try to put it where it's not close to the ground or against a wall or another solid surface, leaving little or no slack in your cable or chain. When using a U lock, leave little or no space in the lock's middle to prevent prying.

**Removable Items:** When you leave your bike, remove any parts you can't lock and a thief could steal easily: a quick-release seat, horn, bike bag, pump, cycle computer, or lights. If removing quick-release parts is a hassle, replace them with permanent ones.

### **WHERE TO PARK:**

**Bike Racks** are not all created equally. The best are made with thick, sturdy tubing, are bolted down, and allow you to lock both the frame and the wheel to the rack.

**Parking Meters** are okay if you are using a U-lock. Never lock to a meter with only a chain or cable. A thief will slide your bike over the top.

**Parking Ramps:** All City of Appleton parking ramps have bike racks for free public use. Many private businesses and office buildings with parking ramps also have bike racks where your bicycle will be protected from the elements.

**Indoors:** A good way to avoid theft and protect your bike from the elements. Check with your employer and see what arrangements you can make. Is there an empty office, extra cranny in the hallway or a storage room where a bike or two could be stashed?

### **CUTTING YOUR THEFT LOSSES**

What's the first thing to do when you get a new bike? Write down the serial number and register your bike. Look for the serial number stamped on your bike's frame. You will find it under the crank, on the head tube, seat post tube, or on the frame's rear wheel mount.

**Identifying Marks:** You can discourage thieves by engraving your name or social security number in an obvious place on your bike frame. Or put a card with your name and phone number inside the handlebar tube-so if you find your stolen bike at an auction, junk shop, or flea market, you can prove it's yours.

**If Your Bike Is Stolen:** First, find your bike's serial number if you have it. Then call the police in the jurisdiction where the bicycle was stolen and tell them where your bike was stolen. Try to get a police report number that you can use for an insurance claim. Also find out how police will contact you if they find your bike.

**Looking for Your Bike:** Sometimes you can find your bicycle at places like pawn shops, auctions, or resale shops that might deal in stolen merchandise. But if you find your stolen bike among other property that someone's selling, remember that they won't just give it to you; you must prove it's yours. Re-contact the police and tell them you found your bicycle and let them recover it for you.

## **6. THE ALL WEATHER BICYCLIST**

### **RIDING AT NIGHT AND IN BAD WEATHER**

#### **HOW TO BE SEEN AT NIGHT**

**Defensive Riding:** At night, it's hard to see road hazards, and to anticipate the moves of drivers. You can't see where they're looking, and some may be drunk. Slow down from your daylight speed. To make sure drivers see you when you're stopped, flash your lights by twitching your handlebars back and forth. Watch cars closely, and be ready to get out of their way.

**Know Your Route:** If you're new at night riding, take streets where you know the potholes and traffic so you can focus on riding in the dark.

**Night Blindness:** Don't bike at night if your visual acuity is worse than 20/40 with glasses or contacts, or you can read a far-away sign or address okay in daylight but not at night. See a doctor to be sure.

### **Light up!**

Only three percent of bike rides happen at night, but over half of all cyclists killed get hit while riding at night without lights. At night, Wisconsin law requires a white front light visible from 500 feet, and a red rear reflector visible from 50 to 500 feet. That's not much; you can see a car's headlights from 3,000 feet, and that's what most motorists look for. (Under bright streetlights you need bike lights to be seen, not to see). Remember your upper body is at eye level so it's important to wear bright clothing at night.

### **Riding In Rain & Snow**

**Wet Streets:** Wet streets can be hazardous. Watch out for railroad tracks, sewer and manhole covers, painted pavement, and leaves get slippery when wet. Don't brake or turn suddenly on them.

**Puddles.** Don't ride through a puddle if you can't see the bottom. It could be a deep pothole that could make you crash or dent your wheel.

**Start of rain.** Don't race to beat the rain when it starts. That's when streets are slickest, because oil or anti-freeze on the road spreads before it washes away. Turn slower and with less lean.

**Slow Down:** Remember that motorists and cyclists can't see as well in rain or snow. And it takes longer to stop, so to be safe, go slower than normal.

**Braking:** When brake pads are wet they take up to ten times longer to work. Dry them by applying your brakes far ahead of where you want to slow down, causing your pads to wipe the rims. To dry them faster, pump the brakes by applying them, then letting go, over and over.

**Snow:** Snow crews usually clear major streets within a day of a major snowfall. Walk your bike to one and get going.

**Ice.** Snow hides ice on the pavement, so be cautious when riding on snow.

**Build-up.** With piles of snow on the right, ride in the middle of the right lane. Let cars pass in heavy traffic. But remember, you are required by law to ride only as far to the right as is practicable, and riding through deep slush piles is not practicable!

### **Dressing for Cold & Wet Weather**

People who bicycle in the cold and rain aren't nuts; they're just dressed right. But How? Here are some ideas:

**Ears:** Wide headbands or earmuffs fit under your helmet.

**Neck:** Wool scarf, cotton turtleneck, or neck gaiter keeps icy air from blasting down your shirt.

**Hands:** Use gardening or fishing gloves, ski gloves, or thickly lined hunter's gloves. Make sure gloves will grip brake handles well.

**Crotch:** To prevent unusual frostbite, avoid porous warm-up pants. Wear wind-proof tights or pants.

**Legs:** When its cold but dry, wear loose-fitting, average-weight pants. When it's colder use long underwear or a second pair of tights.

**Head:** Cover it unless you have thick hair. A tight-fitting hood covers your ears and fits under your helmet.

**Hoods:** Don't use loose-fitting hoods that block peripheral vision.

**Neck:** High collar or hood keeps water from going down your neck.

**Rain gear:** Wear a waterproof jacket. If sweat's a problem, wear a loose or vented jacket, a waterproof poncho that lets in air from below, or a cyclist's rain cape that hooks to handlebars to keep it out of your tires.

## 7. RESOURCES FOR BICYCLISTS

Need some support or want more information? Your local bike shop is a great source of information. If they don't have your answer, here are some places to go, people to see, and web addresses to check out.

### WEB PAGES

For information on commuting, go to the Bike To Work Week page. There you will find answers to many questions, encouragement, books, people, ideas, more web links, and fun.

<http://www.btww.org>

### MAPS

**Bicycle Map of Wisconsin** (set of four).

Every state and county road in Wisconsin rated for how bicycle friendly they are. Very comprehensive. Retailing in bike shops, or call the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin.

### BOOKS

If you want to learn more about bicycle commuting, refer to some of the books listed below. Check your favorite bookstore and public library for more titles.

**Urban Bikers' Tricks and Tips**, by Dave Glowacz, Wordspace Press, 1998. A wonderful, funny, and very informative book on how to get around in a city.

**Bicycle Commuting Made Easy** from Bicycling Magazine, 1992. This book covers riding in traffic, eating right, and commuting in icky weather.

**Street Smarts - Bicycling's Traffic Survival Guide**, by John Allen, Rodale Press, 1988. Available from Rodale Press. Good introduction to effective cycling techniques.

**The Essential Bicycle Commuter**, by Trudy Bell, McGraw Hill, 1998. A complete guide to pedalling to work and shopping.

**Effective Cycling**, by John Forester, MIT Press, 1992. Excellent detailed discussion of many aspects of bicycling and bike maintenance.

### GROUPS

To encourage you to get out and bike, try contacting one of the groups listed on the Bicycling Community Page, including:

**Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin.**

Statewide non-profit advocacy and education. 106 E Doty St., Ste. 10 PO Box 1224 Madison, WI 53701-1224 251-4456 [bfw@mailbag.com](mailto:bfw@mailbag.com)