

“Under the Trooper’s Hat”

By: Trooper Michael Hayen, North Dakota Highway Patrol
Rural Bicycle Safety

For bicyclists around the country, North Dakota offers beautiful views of vast prairie with meandering, winding roads to travel on. During the warmer months, we tend to see an influx of bicyclists traveling through and spending time resting in our little communities. We all enjoy talking to and learning from these two-wheeling explorers and look to provide them with an opportunity for safe travels as they pass through our state and move on to their next destination.

It is important to remember that bicyclists have the same rights as a motor vehicle. The laws that apply to motor vehicles also apply to bicycles. Bicyclists are required to ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practical, exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or a vehicle proceeding in the same direction. If there is a group of bicyclists riding on the roadway, they may not ride more than two abreast, except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. Bicyclists are allowed to travel on the Interstate system to include I94 and I29.

One of my greatest fears is if an inattentive motorist collides with a bicyclist on a rural roadway. The point I cannot stress enough is to pay attention to your surroundings. Distractions such as talking on the phone, using social media apps, texting, eating, reading, and talking to others reduces the amount of attention you are paying to your surroundings and approaching hazards. Saying “I never saw them” is not an excuse if you hit someone while driving.

Pay attention and be prepared to slow down when approaching a hill crest as there may be a bicyclist on the other side. A motorist may be unable to see what is on the other side and may suddenly come upon a bicyclist, resulting in the need to make a quick decision on how to respond.

When you come up on a bicyclist, slow down and pass them safely. Attempt to get as far away from them as possible and leave plenty of distance before you return to your traffic lane. Use extreme caution when traveling with wide loads, wide mirrors, and trailers when passing and returning to your travel lane. If there is oncoming traffic and you are unable to pass the bicyclist, do not crowd or harass them. They have the same right to be on the road as you do. Let’s provide a positive image of North Dakota and help us to achieve #VisionZeroND.

The mission of the North Dakota Highway Patrol is to make a difference every day by providing high-quality law enforcement services to keep North Dakota safe and secure. NDHP invites you to visit the FAQ section of our website: www.nd.gov/ndhp, like our Facebook page www.facebook.com/northdakotahighwaypatrol or join us on Twitter [@NDHighwayPatrol](https://twitter.com/NDHighwayPatrol) or Instagram, www.instagram.com/ndhighwaypatrol, where you can learn more about traffic safety, get tips, and read NDHP news. Download the NDHP mobile app to receive notifications, download a .pdf of items to include in your winter weather travel kit, report a crime tip, thank a trooper, ask a question, or make a suggestion for next month's *Under the Trooper's Hat* feature.