Riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk [§316.2065(10),(11)]

When riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk, a cyclist has all the rights and duties of a pedestrian. A cyclist riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk must yield the right of way to a pedestrian and must give an audible warning before passing a pedestrian.

Comment: Sidewalks are not designed for bicycle speeds, but bicycle use is allowed except where prohibited by local ordinance (e.g., in central business districts of many cities). Regulations pertaining to equipment and carriage still apply.

Since a cyclist riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk has the rights of a pedestrian, he may ride in either direction. At a signalized intersection, he must obey the instructions of any applicable pedestrian control signal. Thus, he may start to cross a roadway in a crosswalk only when the signal indicates for the parallel roadway traffic flow [§316.084].

Road riders are drivers

Florida’s bicycle laws for cyclists and other drivers

Operating in traffic is a cooperative activity, conducted according to rules. Following the rules and applying the skills needed to observe them promotes safe and efficient travel. Drivers who see and can predict each other’s actions are less likely to conflict with each other.

Bicycle drivers and the Florida Uniform Traffic Control Law

Operating a vehicle safely and efficiently in traffic requires the ability to collect and process information about traffic conditions, determine a course of action, and execute it—all on a continuous basis. As a cyclist on a roadway, you are the driver of a vehicle and are responsible for complying with the Florida Uniform State Traffic Control Law. This code, set forth in Chapter 316 of the Florida Statutes, governs the operation of all vehicles operated on public roads in Florida.

A bicycle is classified as a vehicle [Section 316.003(2), F.S.]. A person in control of a vehicle on a street or highway is a driver [§316.003(10)]. As a driver, a cyclist must follow the traffic rules common to all drivers.

As the driver of a bicycle, he must also obey regulations adopted specially for bicycles. A cyclist has all of the rights applicable to any driver, except as to special regulations for bicycles [§316.2065(1)].

Equipment & carriage

Lamps and rear reflector [§316.2065(8)]

A bicycle operated between sunset and sunrise shall be equipped with a lamp on the front exhibiting a white light visible from 500 feet to the front, and both a red reflector and a lamp on the rear exhibiting a red light visible from 600 feet to the rear.

Comment: Over half of fatal bicycle crashes in Florida occur after sunset, even though most cycling occurs during daylight hours. If you ride at night, use a battery- or generator-powered headlamp; if lights are battery-powered, carry spare batteries or mount a second lamp as a spare (some LED lamps last many hours). Rear reflector and taillamp should be aimed straight back.

Reflective leg bands and pedal reflectors help to indicate motion. Retroreflective clothing can also help you to be seen.

Brakes [§316.2065(14)]

Every bicycle must be equipped with a brake or brakes that allow the rider to stop within 25 feet from a speed of 10 mph on dry, level, clean pavement.

Bicycle helmet [§316.2065(3)(d)]

A bicycle rider or passenger under 16 years of age must wear a bicycle helmet that is properly fitted, fastened securely, and meets a nationally recognized standard.

Comment: Head injuries account for about one third of hospital emergency room visits for bicycle-related injuries. Bicycle helmets, properly fitted and worn, have been found effective in reducing the incidence and severity of head, brain, and upper facial injury. The role model effect of adults is an important factor in enhancing helmet-wearing by children. By federal law, bicycle helmets sold in the US are required to meet the standard of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Headset not to be worn [§316.304]

A cyclist may not wear a headset, headphone or listening device, other than a hearing aid, while riding.

Comment: Use of such devices can be distracting. A cyclist should not rely on hearing when changing lane position, crossing another roadway, etc. Sounds of an approaching vehicle may be masked by other traffic or, in some cases (bicycle, hybrid-electric car) too soft to be heard.

Carriage of other riders [§316.2065(3)(a)]

A bicycle may not be used to carry more persons at one time than the number for which it is designed or equipped. However, an adult cyclist may carry a child in a backpack or sling, child seat or trailer designed to carry children.

Operating on the roadway

Obedience to traffic control devices [§316.074]

As the driver of a bicycle, he must also obey the traffic control devices common to all drivers. A bicycle is classified as a vehicle [Section 316.003(2), F.S.]. A person in control of a vehicle on a street or highway is a driver [§316.003(10)]. As a driver, a cyclist must follow the traffic rules common to all drivers.

As the driver of a bicycle, he must also obey regulations adopted specially for bicycles. A cyclist has all of the rights applicable to any driver, except as to special regulations for bicycles [§316.2065(1)].

Since a cyclist riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk has the rights of a pedestrian, he may ride in either direction. At a signalized intersection, he must obey the instructions of any applicable pedestrian control signal. Thus, he may start to cross a roadway in a crosswalk only when the signal indicates for the parallel roadway traffic flow [§316.084].

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A bicycle lane is an extra lane on the roadway designated for the use of bicycles. A cyclist may leave a bicycle lane in any of the exceptional situations described above. Most bicycle lanes are designed for through travel, to make left or right turns, a cyclist should use the appropriate lanes. Where a bicycle lane is continued along the right side on an intersection approach, a cyclist who intends to go straight through the intersection may adjust his position to the left to avoid the hazard of being cut off by a right-turning motorist (in about 3 percent of the motor vehicle crashes of bicycle cyclists, the cyclist was cut off by a right-turning motorist). Where restricted conditions prevent inclusion of bicycle lanes or paved shoulders on laned roadways, Florida Department of Transportation engineering guidance recommends an outside lane width greater than 12 feet. A lane width of 14 feet [4.3 m] is recommended for shared use as the “minimum width that will allow passenger cars to safely pass bicyclists within a single lane,” i.e., without the need to use part of the next lane (Florida Greenbook, sect. 9.B.3). See “Overtaking and passing a vehicle” under “Other laws for drivers” below. A cyclist riding past a car parallel-parked on a street should maintain at least 3 feet [1 m] of clearance to avoid risk of collision if a car door on the driver side is opened. When overtaking on the right is permitted [§316.084] Overtaking on the right is permitted upon a street or highway with unobstructed pavement not occupied by parked vehicles, of sufficient width for two or more lines of moving traffic in each direction. The driver of a vehicle may overtake and pass another vehicle on the right only under conditions permitting such movement in safety. Comment: A cyclist traveling in a bicycle lane, or in a lane wide enough for motor vehicles and bicycles to share (see “Roadway position” above), may pass motor vehicles on the right, because in this case there is not necessarily a lane for bicycle traffic (one of which is bicycle traffic). However, the cyclist should proceed with care. Cars or trucks may turn at driveways, or at the next intersection. Operation on limited access facilities [§316.091] No person shall operate a bicycle on a limited access facility, except as otherwise provided. No person shall operate a bicycle on the roadway or shoulder of an interstate highway. Comment: At this time, the exception provided is for the Jacksonville Expressway System [§349.04(1)].