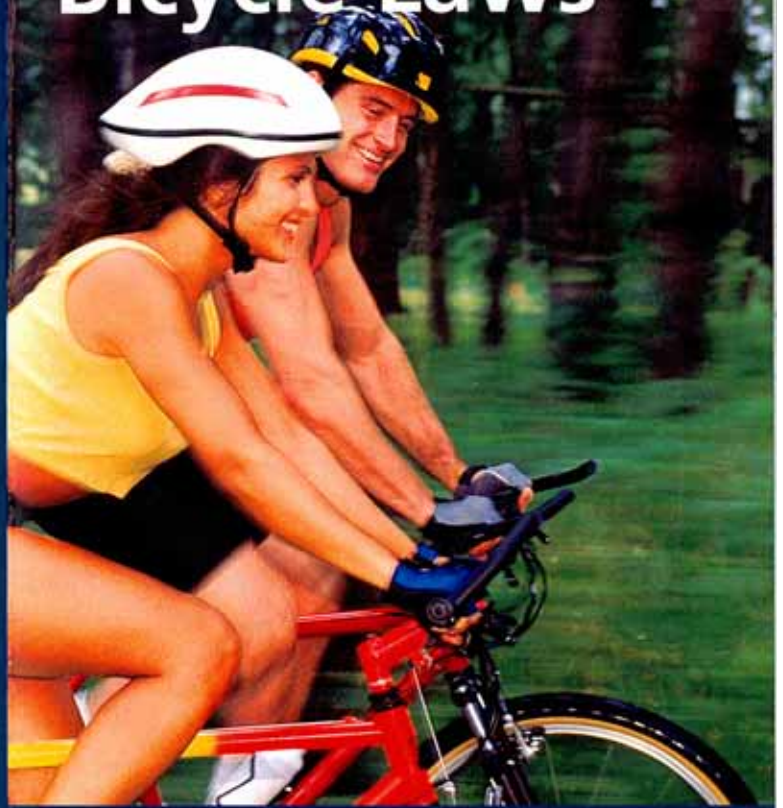


## About AAA

When you join AAA, you join an organization dedicated to making the road of life easy to travel. Our legendary Emergency Road Service is simply the beginning. Members enjoy automotive benefits, Members-only Insurance, a full-service Travel Agency, and hundreds of AAA discounts and perks at home and around the country. For more information, visit [aaa.com](http://aaa.com).

For more than 100 years, AAA of Northern California has steadfastly spoken out on behalf of the interest of its Members and the traveling public. Through community efforts with AAA Members, community leaders, state legislature and Congress, we support a variety of programs and legislation intended to improve access to safe and reliable transportation and overall quality of the environment in which we live.

# California Bicycle Laws



AAA wants you to know about  
safety on your bike



## Are you a Safe Bicyclist?

Safe bicycling involves more than wearing the proper safety equipment and keeping your bike in good mechanical order—you must also learn the rules of the road. The following are important excerpts from the California Vehicle Code (VC) relating to the operation and equipping of bicycles. This brochure is designed to provide an overview of California's bicycle laws. We challenge you to learn these laws and to ride responsibly.

### Bicycle defined. VC 231

Defines bicycle as a device upon which any person may ride, propelled exclusively by human power through a belt, chain, or gears and having



one or more wheels. Specifically provides that persons riding bicycles are subject to Vehicle Code provisions specified in Sections 21200 and 21200.5 (see below).

### Bicycle use. VC 21200

Every person riding a bicycle upon a street or highway has all the rights and is subject to all the duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle, including the provisions of law dealing with driving under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs, except those provisions which by their very nature can have no application.

### Bicycling under influence of alcohol or drugs. VC 21200.5

Provides that it is unlawful to ride a bicycle upon a street or highway while under the influence of an alcoholic beverage or drug or the combination of alcohol and a drug, punishable by a fine of up to \$250. A person arrested may request a chemical test.



If the person is under 21 but over 13 years of age, his or her driving privilege will be suspended for one year or delayed for one year once the person is eligible to drive.

### Equipment requirements. VC 21201

- a) No person shall operate a bicycle on a roadway unless it is equipped with a brake which will enable the operator to make one braked wheel skid on dry, level, clean pavement.
- b) No person shall operate on the highway any bicycle equipped with handlebars so raised that the operator must elevate their hands above the level of their shoulders in order to grasp the normal steering grip area.
- c) No person shall operate upon any highway a bicycle which is of such a size as to prevent the operator from safely stopping the bicycle, supporting it in an upright position with at least one foot on the ground, and restarting it in a safe manner.

d) Every bicycle operated upon any highway during darkness shall be equipped with the following:

- 1) A lamp emitting a white light which illuminates the highway and is visible from a distance of 300 feet to the front and from the sides of the bicycle.
- 2) A red reflector mounted on the rear of the bicycle and visible from 500 feet to the rear of the bicycle.
- 3) A white or yellow reflector mounted on each pedal visible 200 feet to the front and rear of the bicycle.
- 4) A white or yellow reflector on each side forward of the center of the bicycle and a white or red reflector on each side to the rear of the center of the bicycle, except bicycles which are equipped with reflectorized tires on the front and the rear need not be equipped with side reflectors. All reflectors and reflectorized tires must meet DMV requirements.

e) A lamp or lamp combination, emitting a white light, attached to the operator and visible from a distance of 300 feet in front and from the sides of the bicycle, may be used in place of a lamp (white light) attached to the bike.

### Duty of bicycle operator: operation on roadway. VC 21202

a) Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic moving in the same direction at such time shall ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway except under any of the following situations:

- 1) When overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction.

2) When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.

3) When reasonably necessary to avoid conditions (including, but not limited to, fixed or moving objects, vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, animals, surface hazards, or substandard width lanes) that make it unsafe to continue along the right-hand curb or edge. For purposes of this section, a "substandard width lane" is a lane that is too narrow for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane.

4) When approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.

b) Any person operating a bicycle on a one-way street or highway with two or more marked traffic lanes, may ride as near the left-hand curb or edge of such roadway as practicable.

#### Hitching rides. VC 21203

No person riding upon any motorcycle, motorized bicycle, bicycle, coaster, roller skates, sled, or toy vehicle shall attach the same or themselves to any streetcar or vehicle on the roadway.

#### Riding on bicycle. VC 21204

a) No person operating a bicycle on a highway shall ride other than on a permanent and regular attached seat.

b) No person operating a bicycle on a highway shall allow anyone to ride as a passenger other than on a separate attached seat.

If the passenger is four years old or younger or weighs 40 pounds or less, the seat shall adequately retain the passenger in place and protect him/her from the bicycle's moving parts.

#### Carrying articles. VC 21205

No person operating a bicycle shall carry any package, bundle, or article which prevents the operator from keeping at least one hand upon the handlebars.

#### Permitted moments from bicycle lanes. VC 21208

a) Whenever a bicycle lane has been established on a roadway, any person operating a bicycle upon the roadway at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic moving in the same direction shall ride in the bicycle lane, except under the following situations:

1) When overtaking or passing another bicycle, vehicle, or pedestrian within the lane or about to enter the lane if such overtaking and passing cannot be done safely within the lane.

2) When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.

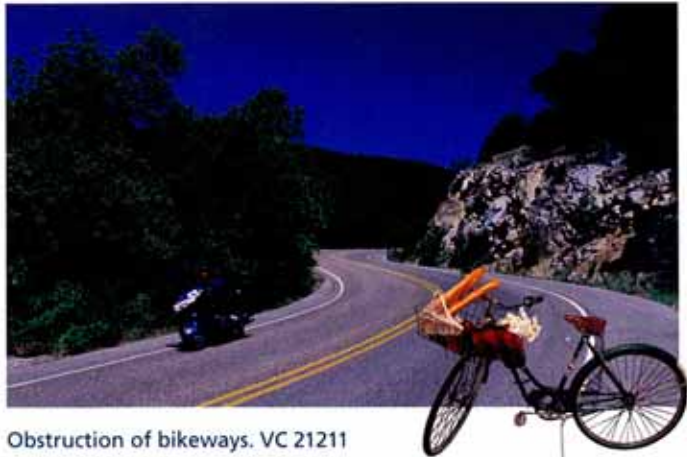
3) When necessary to leave the lane to avoid debris or other hazardous conditions.

4) When approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.

b) No operator of a bicycle shall leave a bicycle lane until it can be done safely and then only after giving an appropriate hand signal in the event that any vehicle might be affected by the movement.

#### Parking. VC 21210

No person shall leave a bicycle lying on its side on any sidewalk, or shall park a bicycle on a sidewalk in any other position, so that there is not an adequate path for pedestrian traffic. Local authorities may prohibit bicycle parking in designated areas of the public highway, provided appropriate signs are erected.



#### Obstruction of bikeways. VC 21211

No person shall place or park a bicycle or vehicle so as to impede or block the normal and reasonable movement of any bicyclist on a bikeway or bicycle path or trail unless the placement or parking is necessary for safe operation or otherwise in compliance with the law.

#### Youth Helmets. VC 21212

A person under 18 years of age shall not operate a bicycle, or ride upon a bicycle as a passenger, upon a street, bikeway, or any other public bicycle path or trail unless the person is wearing a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet that conforms to the applicable safety standards. This requirement also applies to a passenger in a restraining seat that is attached to the bicycle or in a trailer towed by the bicycle. Violations are punishable by a fine of not more than \$25.

### **Bicycles on roadways. VC 21650.1**

A bicycle operated on a roadway or highway shoulder shall be operated in the same direction as vehicles are required to be driven upon the roadway.

### **Bicycling on freeways. VC 21960**

- a) The Department of Transportation and local authorities may prohibit or restrict the use of freeways or any portion thereof by bicycles.
- b) Such prohibitory regulations authorized by 21960(a)VC shall be effective when appropriate signs giving notice thereof are erected upon the freeway and the approaches thereto.

### **Hand signals. VC 22111**

All required signals given by hand and arm shall be given from the left side of the bicycle in the following manner:

- a) Left turn—hand and arm extended horizontally beyond the side of the bicycle.
- b) Right turn—left hand and arm extended upward beyond the side of the bicycle except that a bicyclist may extend the right hand and arm horizontally to the right side of the bicycle.
- c) Stop or sudden decrease of speed signal—left hand and arm extended downward beyond the side of the bicycle.

### **Toll crossing. VC 23330**

Except where a special permit has been obtained from the Department of Transportation, bicycles shall not be permitted on any vehicular crossing, unless the Department by signs indicates that bicycles are permitted upon all or any portion of the vehicular crossing.

### **Headsets and earplugs. VC 27400**

No person operating any vehicle or bicycle shall wear any headset covering, or any earplugs in, both ears. There are exceptions for persons operating authorized emergency vehicles, special construction or maintenance equipment and refuse collection equipment, and for any person wearing personal hearing protectors designed to attenuate injurious noise levels and which do not inhibit the wearers' ability to hear a siren or horn from an emergency vehicle or horn from another motor vehicle, and for any person using a prosthetic device which aids the hard of hearing.

### **License requirement. VC 39002**

- a) A city or county may adopt a bicycle licensing ordinance or resolution which provides that no resident shall operate any bicycle on any street, road, highway, or other public property within the city or county, unless such bicycle is licensed in accordance with this division.

- b) It is illegal for any person to tamper with, destroy, mutilate or alter any license indicia (marking) or registration form, or to remove, alter, or mutilate the serial number, or the identifying marks of a licensing agency's identifying symbol on any bicycle frame licensed under the provision of this division.

### **Throwing substances on highways or adjoining areas. VC 23111 & 23112**

No person in any vehicle shall throw or discharge from or upon any road, highway or adjoining area, public or private, any lighted or non-lighted cigarette, cigar, match or any flaming or glowing substance.

No person shall throw or deposit upon a highway any bottle, can, garbage, glass, wire, nails, paper or any substance likely to injure or cause damage to traffic using the highway.

NOTE: Some of the sections of the laws listed above have been reworded slightly and/or abbreviated. For exact language, refer to the referenced sections in the California Vehicle Code.

In addition to these state laws, many communities have local ordinances. Check with your local police department regarding bicycle registration, licensing, and regulations (sidewalk riding, etc.) in your area.

### **Final Thoughts**

Each year in California, over one hundred people are killed and thousands more are injured in bicycle collisions. We can make bicycling safer for all by observing the following safety tips:

- Always wear a helmet
- Obey all traffic controls
- Ride your bicycle near the right-hand edge of the road
- Never carry another person on your bicycle
- Always use hand signals when turning or stopping
- Look out for cars at cross streets, driveways, and parking places
- Be careful when checking traffic and don't swerve when looking over your shoulder
- Give pedestrians the right-of-way
- Keep your bicycle in good condition
- Always ride carefully

Remember, bicyclists share a complex traffic environment with other larger forms of transportation. Youngsters under age nine lack the physical and mental development to interact safely in that environment. If you would like more information on safe bicycling, please contact your local AAA.