

Subject: Ready2Roll Cycling - Safety Tips Time

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Important (& Useful) Safety Tips - Please Read!

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It's Monday which means it's time for some good safety feedback and tips. Please take a few minutes to read these tips because we have covered several before but we can always get better. The tips are here to help all of us become safer and more courteous which will increase everyone's enjoyment of the training rides and better prepare us for the big ride to Austin.

Today's tips will cover:

- **Communication is a Two-Way Process**
- **Riding two abreast vs. Single File**
- **Music – Not Just Headphones**
- **Allow extra time/distance if Riding with a Group**
- **Dog Says Ahead (and Behind)**
- **Arrive on Time**
- **The Most Dangerous 5 Letter Word in Cycling**

OK, let's get right to the meat of this message...

Communication is a Two-Way Process

I have written about this at length but some of you still don't get it so I'll keep it as concise as possible – please read this.

Several riders have reported being passed without any advance notice and others have reported approaching groups of riders two (or more) abreast and calling to approach, to no avail – the group ahead seems oblivious and doesn't move to allow a safe pass.

Part of the issue last weekend was the wind – it's hard to be heard very far ahead when there is a stiff headwind but with the right approach and some common sense, it is possible. The key to communicating to riders as you approach is:

- Alert them of your approach – In a group, the 2nd rider (has more energy than the 1st as they aren't directly fighting the wind) literally barks out: "Riders approaching" something similar 10-20 yards away. The distance is larger as the speed increases but this is tempered by the wind – if it's stiff, you need to be 10-15 yards ahead to be heard. You don't need to be fully understood, the noise as you call out is what matters.

- rider(s) you are approaching.
- Alert as you start the pass – The first riders says: “6 riders passing on the “long line...” or something to let the riders being passed know what’s coming
- Inform as you pass – every 2nd to 3rd rider says “Thanks, more riders back about 2-3 riders from the end, the rider says: “2 more riders coming”
- Complete the pass – The last rider says: “Last Rider, thanks!”

This may sound like a lot of useless work but if you practice enough, it becomes nature and riders think much more highly of you when you come by.

This also avoids startling riders who don’t hear you until you are very close. I saw a paceline do this at a local ride a few years ago. The rider being passed jerked suddenly when they zoomed by, his bike pulled to the left and the slower riders in the line hit the pavement pretty hard. This all could have been easily prevented if the line had called before they were on the rider so if he jerked, there was room for a collision.

On the other side of the communication coin, riders need to be listening so they can approach riders and traffic. I had reports of groups that were riding two (or three) abreast and did not stop talking and get into single file to let faster riders safely pass. There is no reason or excuse to impede bike traffic (or vehicle traffic). All you need to do is stop talking for a moment, let the rider(s) or vehicle(s) come by, then you return to riding two abreast and talking, as long as you stay alert to conditions around you. Please don’t incur the wrath of riders you are holding up and don’t put your own way by not listening for and accommodating local traffic.

PS – We are not riding the Tour de France so we can’t spread out across the entire road. On the roads where we train, two abreast is the most you should be spread out. Wider and you can’t safely get to single file in a reasonable amount of time. You have to go to single file to make a pass as you have to be two abreast just to make a pass of a single file rider – or line of riders.

Riding two abreast vs. Single File

Speaking of two abreast vs. single file, don’t forget that if you see riders approaching from the other way on the road, your line needs to go single file because you are making a narrow line just on opposite sides of the street. The group I was riding with had a few riders spread out on the front as we were headed out on Sunday. I called out for single file when I saw the first groups of riders heading back but they didn’t move right away and other riders correctly let me know that my group was not demonstrating the safe riding practices I preach. We definitely need to do better than we did yesterday.

Music – Not Just Headphones

Speaking of communicating and listening, it’s really hard to listen, or hear, when music is cranked up pretty loud. I do realize that you may like loud music but a local ride is not the appropriate place to listen to anything loud, except the voices back behind you as they approach into a headwind. We don’t permit headphones and have to ban speakers if we continue to get reports of riders who can’t hear riders trying to communicate because of the volume of their music. We don’t want to be music police but please limit music to a volume that allows you to easily hear riders who need to communicate with you. If you don’t hear them, your music is too loud.

Allow extra time/distance if Riding with a Group

We received feedback from a local resident who was transporting some horses in a trailer when a group of our riders pulled out from a side road. Because of the tight turn, she had to stop pretty quickly vs. the usual long stopping distance a large trailer needs. The horses were shaken up and she barely stopped in time. Please understand that when you are riding with a group, the larger the group, the longer the distance needed to stop. You allow before pulling out. When you start to go, there may be plenty of room to see a vehicle approaching, consider how many riders may be following you and choose a safe side so you don’t put any of your group at risk trying to hang onto the group.

A related tip is dealing with the occasional traffic light. We try to ride out beyond developed areas where there is no need for lights but we may occasionally encounter one on a route. If you do encounter a light while in a group and if we don’t have a police enforcement office controlling the light, your group needs to agree to slow as you

approach to allow a quick, safe stop and the group needs to communicate/understand internally that if part of the group needs to stop, the rest will ride very slowly on in a safe spot past the light until the rest of the group makes it through the light. DON'T run lights, or stop signs – just allow the slight slow-down and easy riding group is safely back together.

Dog Says Ahead (and Behind) Us

I understand that some of you encountered dogs on the road on Sunday. We a 10-54 (Livestock on the highway) reported to us but a quick call to the local law enforcement got the cattle corralled before we got there.

If you encounter dogs (or cows, cats, etc.) on the road, the best approach is to "dog" (or cows, etc.) which means:

- Slow down steadily (ease on the brake after first communicating: "slow")
- Allow a lot more room between riders
- Keep an eye on the animal while maintaining a slower but steady pace.
- Some may give chase and others will lose interest – be patient and maintain slower steady pace and distance until safely past.
- Many times, we see a dog dart after one rider, usually at or near the front. They may suddenly lose interest, and stop – right in the path of the next rider. This results in a yelp from the dog if it is hit but may also result in broken ribs for the rider if you don't allow plenty of room so you can avoid the dog.

Arrive on Time

This week, several riders arrived quite late – everyone had already departed as far up to the sign-in tables. It was a good thing my group was late getting on the road or they would have been behind all the riders AND all the SAGs. The last SAGs are to pick up our turn signs after the last rider passes so, if you arrive late and are not the SAGs, you better know the route and the local roads very well or you will get lost. The route and we won't know since you started behind the back of our support.

I wish we could hold SAGs up for 30 minutes to an hour but we would need a lot of volunteers to be able to spread the support team out this much and we're just trying to hit our volunteer needs so we need to get our SAGs on the road when the 90% who arrived on time are on the road and the 10% who arrive late may be without support and signage if you arrive too late. This will be a real issue this coming Saturday. We have a very pleasant two lane road the last 22 miles to New Ulm from Seelye. It's narrower, one mile road to the start – where our riders will be departing promptly at 8 am. If you are late, you won't be able to get in since riders are heading out.

The Most Dangerous 5 Letter Word in Cycling

Warning – I am about to share one of the most dangerous words in the cycling vocabulary. It's a very nasty word that should be banished from the roads forever. I worry – it's not a four letter word but it is an awful word.

The word I am referring to is "Clear".

When cyclists yell "Clear!", what they are really saying is: "The road (or intersection, light or stop sign) looked just fine when I passed through and you should cast aside the wind and ignore all common sense and not bother to check to see if it is all clear for you to come through." OK, I know it's much easier to just say "Clear" but do you wish that everyone around you would pay no attention to the roads and risk getting injured or worse because they didn't take the time to make sure the area was safe for them to proceed. I even heard "Clear" in my group and made some remarks that they should not be using that term.

Everyone please join me in correcting anyone who you hear calling "Clear". When you hear this, call back: "Please don't say Clear", and remind riders to slow/stop as appropriate and each rider needs to confirm it is clear for them to proceed.

OK, We're at 3.33 pages so I'll stop here so you can read, absorb, and practice/demonstrate your mastery of these tips over the next six weeks. Please

read and refer to this note frequently until these are all embedded in your cycling consciousness.

I look forward to seeing many of you in New Ulm this Saturday. Watch for the news/details this Wednesday.

Thanks!

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