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AUGUST 6-7, 2016

2016 Skills Guide

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## SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU!

Cyclists need to possess basic bike-handling skills and safety knowledge in order to keep themselves and others around them safe, especially while participating in group cycling activities such as Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Tour. The focus of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society-Wisconsin Chapter is to provide a high-quality, safe and fun bicycling experience. For this reason, the Chapter has partnered with the League of American Bicyclists and the Wisconsin Bike Federation to provide participants with the knowledge and resources for cycle safety outlined in this skills guide.

### Get Your Safety Badge



Make sure you're a safe cyclist by taking advantage of safety information provided by the Wisconsin Bike Fed, followed by a quiz to test your knowledge on Wisconsin bike laws and group riding etiquette at [apps.wisconsinbikefed.org/a/group-ride-safety/#App](https://apps.wisconsinbikefed.org/a/group-ride-safety/#App). Earn a Safety Badge on your Bike MS Participant Page upon completion. Take a screenshot of your score and send it to [info.wisMS@nmss.org](mailto:info.wisMS@nmss.org) with "Safety Badge" in the subject line.

More safety information can be found at [wisconsinbikefed.org/for-your-community/share-be-aware](https://wisconsinbikefed.org/for-your-community/share-be-aware).





## ABC QUICK CHECK

All cyclists are responsible for keeping their riding equipment in good working order, so get into the habit of checking your equipment before every ride. Small adjustments can make a significant difference in your experience. The “ABC Quick Check” is an overall, yet brief, bicycle safety check.

### A is for AIR

- ❑ Check your wheels for worn tires, loose spokes and warped rims, and tires for proper inflation.

### B is for BRAKES

- ❑ Check brakes for function, cable tightness, worn pads, frayed cables and alignment of the pads with the rim.
- ❑ Ensure the brake is not rubbing on the wheel. Lift bike and spin wheel to be sure it is spinning freely.

### C is for CRANKS, CHAINS and CASSETTE

- ❑ Check your pedals and cranks for tightness.
- ❑ Check for chain looseness and bad links; clean regularly.
- ❑ Lubricate with bicycle chain lube.
- ❑ Check the derailleur for worn cogs and adjustment.
- ❑ Check that your gears change smoothly.

## QUICK RELEASES

- ❑ Check to ensure that the wheels are clamped securely in the drop-outs before each ride.

## ADDITIONAL SAFETY CHECKS

- ❑ Check your helmet for cracks; make sure it fits properly.
- ❑ Check your shoes for tight cleats and straps and make sure buckles are in good repair.
- ❑ Make sure your bicycle saddle is the right height and the bolt is tight.
- ❑ Check your handlebar for looseness at the headset and stem.



## RIDING IN A GROUP

Group riding takes practice. Riding with other cyclists may cause you to feel trapped. Relax. It is most important to create your own safety zone. This may vary depending on the speed and ability level of the people you are with, so be flexible. Let others know of your anxiety – they may also be new at this.

**Your responsibility in a group includes:** Be aware of others around you. Communicate well in advance. Use gestures in combination with verbal commands. Ride with your head up. Look down the road, and watch the person in front of you. Maintain control and speed of your bike, even going downhill. Know your limits. Crashes can occur when inexperienced riders do not have bike-handling skills to make quick decisions in a pack. Maintain at least three to four feet in front, next to and behind you for unexpected movements by yourself or others. Safety starts with you.

**Group mentality is not always safe.** Expect to stop at all red lights and stop signs – it is the law! Each cyclist is responsible for verifying that the intersection is clear. Adjust your safety zone to fit the conditions to the road, weather and traffic. Always plan an escape route. Never overlap your wheels with another cyclist. Do not use aerobars in a pack. Be aware of how weather will affect your bike. Riding in wet conditions requires slower speeds and greater braking distances. Be respectful of other riders. Help others when needed.

### HELMET SMART

Head injuries are a special concern for cyclists. Even falling at a slow rate of speed can cause a serious head injury. Helmets must be on your head and strapped while riding in Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Tour – no exceptions. Helmets should be replaced within manufacturer guidelines, typically every three to five years or immediately following a crash.



## HYDRATION

**One bottle per hour.** The rule of thumb is to drink one bottle of water per hour and supplement with sports drinks at least every third or fourth hour. If you find that you experience extreme fatigue, the inability to recover your energy or frequent muscle cramps, seek assistance from first aid – you have early signs of dehydration.

**Seek immediate medical assistance.** If you find that you experience weight gain/bloating with progressive symptoms such as swollen hands and feet, confusion, throbbing headache, dizziness or nausea, please seek assistance from first aid.

## BICYCLE LAWS

All states consider cyclists to be vehicle operators and give them the same rights and duties as other drivers.

***If you do not follow the vehicular laws, you will be ticketed!***

- **Know and obey all traffic laws.** The golden rule of bicycling in a group is to be predictable!
- **Stay right.** In the State of Wisconsin, stay as far right as practical (not necessarily as is possible). In other words, ride as far right as you can safely ride. Leave at least four feet between your handlebars and parked cars or other hazards such as other riders. You may move left when passing slow vehicles or preparing for a left turn.
- **Obey all traffic signs and signals.** Avoid “following the leader” through traffic signs and signals. Stop individually at all red lights and stop signs.
- **Look and signal before you move.** Always scan behind you before changing lanes or making turns. An arm signal is required prior to a turn or lane change and while stopped waiting to turn.



- **Two at a time (maximum).** Ride no more than two abreast and do not impede traffic. When impeding traffic, you must change from two abreast to single file.
- **Safety zone.** Keep three feet between you and the rider in front of you.
- **Hands on the handlebars.** Do not carry anything that prevents keeping one hand on the handlebars.
- **Pass with care.** Do not pass at intersections. Follow vehicular laws.

## HELPFUL TIPS

The Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Tour route support team works to make the ride safe. Here are a few additional suggestions to help on the route:

- **Thumbs down for help.** Support & Gear (SAG) vehicles and motorcycle escorts will stop for you if you are off the road, off your bike giving a “thumbs down” sign or holding your helmet in the air.
- **Rest stop etiquette.** All cyclists who enter a rest area must pull over, dismount and move completely away from the road and rest-stop entrance. When exiting, move beyond the rest area and proceed with caution on the right side of the road before merging with faster cyclists.
- **Passing.** Passing others and being passed occurs continuously during the ride. Call out “passing on your left” and allow time for the cyclists being overtaken to move to the right – then pass safely.
- **Mechanical problems.** Examine mechanical problems and change flats completely off the road. If you have a problem you cannot fix yourself, flag down a SAG vehicle and seek a mechanic at the next rest stop.



- **Be courteous.** Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Tour participants are privileged to ride on public roads. Be a courteous road user.
- **Know the lingo.** Group cycling has its own form of communication. The presence of road hazards, directions and need-to-know information is relayed through the pack of riders by gestures and words. Remember to pass all communication on to the next cyclist behind you in the group. Speak loudly and clearly.

#### LINGO:

**On your left** – This means a rider is approaching your left side. Allow room to pass.

**Car back** – This means a car is approaching from the rear. All riders make an effort to move to the right of the road in a single file until the car passes.

**Gravel • Pothole • Sand • Tracks** – Each of these messages is to alert the riders behind you of hazardous road conditions. The words are combined with the gesture of pointing to the hazard well in advance.

**Flat** – This indicates that a rider has suffered a flat tire. Allow enough room for the rider to slow down and move to the right side of the road for repair. Offer assistance if needed.

**Slowing** – The cyclist in front of you is slowing down. Use caution and prepare to stop. Many cyclists point the palm of their hand toward riders behind them to indicate slowing or stopping.

**Stopping** – This indicates that a rider ahead is stopping. Do not forget to unclip from your pedals.





## SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Many cyclists find that situations occur in which quick thinking and heightened bike-handling skills are required. Here are some suggestions for managing potential obstacles:

- **Cars can be scary.** Some drivers may be distracted. Others may not leave the mandatory three feet when passing. When in a group, call out “car back” to alert other riders to ride single file. Be predictable and stay alert.
- **Beware of animals.** Knowing how to handle animals, specifically dogs, on a bicycle varies depending on the situation. You may want to slow down, out-sprint the dog, or yell “stop,” “no” or “go home.” Distracting a dog with a water bottle should only be used when you are not in a pack. Try to keep to one side of the dog.
- **Pedestrians, joggers and animals have the right-of-way.** Signal the pack that someone is being overtaken and move to allow room for safe passing.

## EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

*Bring your cell phone on the route.*

- STEP 1: Pull completely off the road away from all cyclists and motorists.
- STEP 2: Assess if 911 should be called.
- STEP 3: If it is an emergency, call 911 first, then dial 920-349-7044 for help/ride support. In the case of a non-emergency, call 920-349-7197.
- STEP 4: Try to keep the individual(s) calm and comfortable until help arrives.

### FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL CYCLISTS

All Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Tour participants must be at least 12 years old. All riders aged 12–17 must be accompanied by an adult at all times and provide the Chapter with a notarized waiver. Bike trailers, tag-a-longs, child seats and personal SAGS are prohibited.

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Greenfield, WI 53228  
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**National Multiple Sclerosis Society**  
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