

# Ride Leader Guide

**Updated March 2024**

Chattanooga Bicycle Club

# What's in this booklet?

If you've led rides for the Chattanooga Bicycle Club (CBC) in the past, some of the information in this booklet will already be familiar to you. However, we've expanded a great deal on the information passed out to ride leaders in the past. As a result, you'll probably want to look through these guidelines for ideas on how to make your rides even safer or more fun, and as a refresher on the basics of ride leading.

If you haven't led rides before, this booklet will give you a good introduction to how you go about leading a safe, enjoyable ride. You'll find information on how to select a route; what to do before, during, and after the ride; how to handle problems and accidents; and how to make a ride more fun. At the end, you'll also find tips on safe cycling.

**See the checklists at the back:** A couple of day-of-ride checklists are included at the back of this guide. They give a summary of the items you may want to bring to a ride and what to do before and during the ride.

**Not all guidelines apply to every ride:** These guidelines are written for all CBC rides, but the focus is on the most common types of rides — social rides at a slow or moderate pace with regular rest stops. You may need to adapt the guidelines to fit your ride, especially if you lead faster rides with few or no stops.

If you've ridden on a lot of club rides, you already know much of what you need to know to lead a ride of your own. Not everything about leading rides is intuitively obvious, though. Thankfully, there are several resources available for learning more about becoming a ride leader. This booklet is intended to give you a good introduction.

## What kind of ride do you want to lead?

Before you can select a route, decide what kind of ride you want to lead.

Here are some issues to consider:

**Who you want to ride with?** Racers who never stop for anything? Parents with children who stop for every butterfly? Or average riders, who slow down when riding up hills and stop for a great view or a snack?

**What pace do you want to ride?** Be sure it matches the folks you want to ride with.

**How far do you want to ride?** As with the pace, tailor the distance to the people you want to ride with.

**What time do you want to start?** If it's an after-work ride, keep in mind that most folks won't be able to make a start earlier than 6 p.m. Consider, too, that a Saturday ride starting at 9 a.m. may draw a larger crowd than a ride starting earlier.

## Special notes for Kids' rides

Rides for kids have their own advantages and challenges. You get to entertain kids, save hiring a babysitter if you bring your own young kids along, and instill in kids a lifelong love and awareness of bicycling if you do it right. To keep kids entertained, you need to choose the pace, distance, and destination carefully. Shorter and slower is always better. Remember, you don't want to turn kids off to riding.

Suggestions for leading kids' rides:

- Bring young kids along in trailers or on tagalongs, and lead the ride at a slow or moderate adult pace.
- For the sake of parents who don't have thighs of steel, you'll want to avoid extremely hilly routes.
- Avoid roads with heavy or fast traffic.
- River Walk and Chickamauga Battlefield are good places to bring kids.
- Make sure the ride is short enough that the kids don't get bored.
- Plan to stop at a playground or park at the midpoint of the ride.
- Bring snacks for the break.

## Selecting a route

### General considerations:

- You should pre-ride or pre-drive it so you know everything you need to about road conditions; mileage; and water, lunch, and restroom stops.
- Choose a starting point that people can find easily and that has ample parking. If possible, the starting point should also have nearby restrooms.
- Consider food, water, and restroom breaks. Everyone needs to eat and drink, and some bladders are weaker than others.
- Wherever you go, remember to respect private property, and ride only in places where bicycles are welcome.
- Be sure you're not conflicting with anything that could make your ride *very* unpleasant. For example, you wouldn't likely be happy with the results if you were to try to lead a ride anywhere along the Longest Yard Sale route in August.

### Designing your own route

Safety is the deciding factor for all route-related decisions. **If you can't find a safe way to get somewhere, don't go there.** Keep in mind that riding with a group is much different from riding alone, and rarely is it easier.

If you decide to design your own route, here are a few suggestions:

- Avoid intersections too close to a hill or a curve if the opposing traffic isn't required to stop. You want your riders to have an ample view of oncoming traffic and vice versa.
- Avoid streets too narrow for cars to pass unless you'll only be traveling there for a short distance. For example, some streets with medians only have enough room for one lane of traffic in each direction. Some streets with traffic diverters only have enough room for one lane of traffic, period.
- Avoid crossing busy streets except at controlled intersections (those with stop signs or stop lights).
- Avoid heavily traveled, multi-lane roads whenever possible. If you find yourself with no good alternatives, at least try to avoid making left turns. Even with the best of riders, getting a group safely across two lanes of traffic so they can make the turn is a dicey proposition. With inexperienced riders, it can only get worse.
- Try to avoid surprises. Suppose, for example, that you choose a route on which there's a steep uphill just after a turn. If you don't remember to warn riders in advance, they'll all be so distracted trying to get into the correct gear that they won't watch out for one another or for traffic. If you can't circumvent a problem that may stymie your riders, try to warn everyone during the ride, possibly at a stop immediately before you get to that location.
- Explore. The best way to find spectacular views, pedestrian over- and underpasses, wooden bridges, unusual houses, beautiful gardens, or anything else that won't show up on a map is by traipsing around.

## Mapping Out Your Route

Not too many years ago, maps and cue sheets were the way to make sure everyone knew the route. With modern technology being the norm now days, sharing the route electronically is so much easier.

Including a link to your route when you post it on the Chattanooga Bicycle Club Calendar, makes it possible for riders to easily load the route into their navigation devices. You can construct your route using Ride With GPS ([Ridewithgps.com](http://Ridewithgps.com)) or you can use an existing route from the Ride Library located on the Chattanooga Bicycle Club website ([ChattanoogaBicycleClub.com](http://ChattanoogaBicycleClub.com)).

## Posting a ride

If you don't know the exact mileage, it's better to overestimate than underestimate, so no one is unpleasantly surprised. Also, a ride that you may think of as only a little hilly may be very hilly to some riders. Finally, be realistic about the pace that you intend to ride at.

If you're very comfortable riding at 18 to 20 mph when you ride on your own, you'll need to rein yourself in to lead a group at 12 to 14 miles an hour. In your ride description, remember to include any cautions, quirks, or special requirements for your ride. Don't identify anything as "required" unless you intend to enforce the requirement; instead, make "requests" or "recommendations." Here are some examples of items worth including:

- If you're planning a lunch stop, indicate whether people should bring a lunch or bring money for lunch.
- If the ride begins or ends after dark, note that riders should bring headlights and taillights. (Be conservative. If there's a reasonable chance that you won't finish riding until after dark, include that information in the ride description.)
- If you're climbing three mountain passes in the same day, *warn* people in the ride description so you don't get riders who aren't up to it.
- If you're taking a route that's shy of amenities like restaurants and restrooms, caution people so they can bring their own food and toilet paper.
- If you're leading a ride that starts in a remote location, try to encourage carpooling.

## Fielding phone calls from prospective riders

In your ride description posting, provide a phone number so riders can call with questions before the ride.

Typically, callers will want to know whether they can handle your ride. How you answer this question depends on the difficulty of the ride and on your preference as a ride leader. If the ride is difficult, you'll obviously want to be clear with callers about the distance, the speed, the number and size of hills, and so on. If the ride is less strenuous, you have more discretion. For a slow, short, social ride, you may want to encourage anyone who isn't wheezing into the phone to come along. If you take this approach, you must be prepared to wait patiently at the top of every hill for the sightseers.

If you're not prepared to wait for everyone who needs to be waited for, by all means make that clear to callers. Convincing folks they can handle your ride and then leaving them in the dust is a great way to discourage them from ever joining a Club ride again (and a pretty good way to make them drop their membership).

## What to bring to the ride

The items on this list also appear on the "Day-of-ride checklist," at the back of this Guide.

Show up at least 10 minutes early with the necessary stuff:

- Your bike and helmet
- Copies of the Chattanooga Bicycle Club Rider Sign In form.
- A couple of pens

You may also want to bring:

- Basic tools - a pump and tire gauge, an extra tube or patch kit, and tire levers.
- A rudimentary first-aid kit
- A cell phone
- Club Membership cards
- Money

### **If you cancel a ride:**

If you cancel your ride with plenty of notice, post it on the CBC calendar, making note of the cancellation in the title and the body of the posting.

If you cancel a ride at the last minute, show up at the starting point or have someone else go and announce that the ride has been canceled, unless it's obvious from the weather conditions that the ride is canceled.

### **If you can't lead a ride:**

If, for some reason, you can't lead a ride yourself, try to find a replacement. The Road Ride Coordinator may be able to help you find someone.

## **At the beginning of the ride**

### **Get signatures, check on helmets, and get a count**

- Have everyone sign the liability waiver for the ride. On a large ride, you can't know whether everyone has signed, but make a good-faith effort. Riders should sign even if they're not members of the club. **Important!** A parent or legal guardian must sign the liability waiver for any rider under 18 years old. If you have doubts about whether the child will be able to safely complete the ride without holding up the group, you should discuss it with the parent. Carry the liability waiver (in a water proof bag) with you on the ride in case of an emergency.
- The club requires all riders to wear helmets on all rides. If someone arrives without a helmet, ask if any of the other riders has a spare or suggest that the rider try the nearest bike or skate shop; most shops rent helmets.

- Count the riders in your group so you can determine if you have everyone at regrouping points and when leaving rest stops.

## Make a pre-ride announcement, including a reminder about safe riding

Here's a pretty long list of topics to try to cover in a short pre-ride announcement. If you chatter on for too long, people will stop listening, so try not to turn it into a lecture. However, particularly for slow rides that attract a lot of beginners, these are topics that bear repeating time and again.

- Introduce yourself, and identify your sweeps, co-leaders, and other helpers. If the ride will be breaking into two or more groups, explain who will be leading each group.
- Ask if there are any riders who have never been on a Club ride and, if so, welcome them to the group. In addition, encourage the regular riders to check in with the newcomers during the ride and ensure that they're doing all right.
- Ask if everyone has signed the liability waiver and ask if everyone has the route.
- Announce the pace and explain what it means. If you don't intend to wait for slow riders, you should announce this, too.
- Indicate whether the ride will stick together, regroup at the top of hills, or regroup at a specified point. Ask riders to pass the word if someone leaves or breaks down, and to notify you if they're planning to leave the ride before the end.
- Briefly describe the ride, including food and rest stops, difficult hills, unusual or dangerous conditions, the first regrouping point, and hazards and tricky turns before that point.
- Talk about safe riding, and remind riders that each person is responsible for his or her own safety. Request that riders use voice signals during the ride.
- Remind riders that a bicycle is a vehicle and that bicycle riders are, therefore, expected to obey traffic regulations. Caution riders not to run stop lights or stop signs out of fear of being left behind.
- Ask riders to be courteous. Drivers who are impressed with the courtesy of a group of cyclists will be more inclined to treat other cyclists with respect.

## Leading the ride

Every ride is different, so it's impossible to anticipate everything you might encounter on a ride. Here's a fairly comprehensive list of some things to keep in mind. **Note:** Not all of these items apply to all types of rides. For example, if you haven't promised to keep everyone together, you don't have to worry about whether everyone made it through the last stop light. (**Also note:** The items on this list also appear on the "Day-of-ride checklist," at the back of this guide.)

- **Set a good example:** Ride safely, be kind to strangers, pet dogs, kiss babies, and remember that you represent the Chattanooga Bicycle Club.

- **Courtesy:** Anticipate situations where your group may inconvenience others. For example, when you stop to regroup, be sure your riders aren't blocking the road or the sidewalk. When you re-enter the roadway, wait until there's a break in traffic, so drivers aren't forced to slow down for your group.
- **Unsafe riders:** Unsafe riders endanger everyone around them, ruin the experience for others on the ride, and give cyclists a bad image. If you're uncomfortable with a rider's actions, quietly and politely explain your concern. If the situation doesn't improve, ask the rider to leave the group.
- **New riders:** Check in with each of the new riders periodically to ensure that they're getting along all right and that they feel welcome.
- **Pace:** Ride at or near the front to lead the way and set the pace at the advertised speed. If it's a stick-together ride, remind everyone what the pace is and ask them to maintain that pace. Make sure riders know that, if they get ahead, they're on their own. Your responsibility is to lead the ride you've advertised and to keep track of the people who are doing the same.
- **Too-fast and too-slow riders:** At the first regrouping point, if some riders are clearly too fast or too slow for the group, consider splitting into more than one group. You can also ask the fast or slow riders if they'd prefer to break off from the group or return to the starting point. If they choose to leave the group, try to ensure that they know the area well enough to find their way. You can't always keep track of all riders, but do the best you can. Assess how the riders at the back of the group are doing, and adjust the ride as appropriate. Try not to leave anyone behind or lose them. However, you're not obligated to go back and look for anyone. You may want to have someone ride at the back of the group to encourage and keep track of the slower riders. For more information, see "The benefits of having a sweep," on page 9.
- **Regroup frequency:** How often you stop to count heads and make sure everyone is fine depends on a several factors. If you have some slower riders who are consistently falling behind but you don't want to ask them to leave the group, or if you're leading one of those meandering in-city rides on which you turn every time you get to another intersection, you'll need to regroup pretty regularly. If you're riding on the same road for the next 20 miles with a bunch of self-sufficient racers, you may not need to regroup at all. Base your decision on the comfort of the slowest riders, not on the testosterone levels of the fastest riders.
- **Stop lights, stop signs, and crosswalks:** Stop for red lights, stop signs, and pedestrian crosswalks. Not stopping endangers your riders, opens you to liability in the event of an accident, and gives onlookers the impression that cyclists are a bunch of scofflaws. Don't stop too close to the intersection to wait for the group to catch up. Drivers have enough to cope with at intersections without having to worry about a gaggle of cyclists. At a stop sign or stop light, join the line of cars. Don't pass cars on the right and make your way up to the intersection. The cars will just have to pass you again after the intersection, and this **really** makes some drivers mad.
- **Unforeseen problems:** If you run into unforeseen problems (new construction, bad weather, unusually heavy traffic, a closed store), be creative. Change the

route, take shelter, or choose a different rest stop. Consider safety above all else, and don't be afraid to ask for suggestions from your riders. They may know the area better than you do. However, you're in charge, so don't let yourself be railroaded into something that you think is unwise.

- **Mid-ride announcements:** At each regrouping point, announce the next regrouping point. Re-emphasize safety, especially related to upcoming conditions. For example, if you'll need to move into the left lane to make a turn, remind riders to look before they change lanes. If there's a steep uphill immediately after a turn, try to warn riders in advance.
- **Restaurant and restroom stops:** Whenever you stop somewhere with your group, encourage your riders to be considerate of the non-riders around you. When it's time to start riding again, announce your departure enough in advance that everyone has time to stash their extra cookies, get their helmets and gloves on, and untangle their bikes from all of the other bikes leaning against the same tree. In addition, be alert for riders who have wandered off or are in the restroom.
- **Injuries and other problems:** If one of your riders is injured, follow the guidelines under "Handling Injuries," on page 10. For information on handling a variety of other problems, see "Handling other problems," on page 14.
- **Enjoy yourself:** Some rides are a joy to lead, while others are unadulterated drudgery. If you aren't having a good time yourself, think about what you could do differently next time. Moreover, if you aren't having fun, some or all of your riders probably aren't either. Be bold and ask them how you could make the ride more enjoyable.

## Lead from the front? or the back?

You don't necessarily need to lead a ride from the front of the group. As long as you've provided the route, you may be able to serve your riders as well by leading from the back as you can from the front. Some ride leaders spend the ride making their way back and forth between the front and the back of the group, checking to see that everyone is doing all right. Other ride leaders choose to spend the entire ride at the back of the group. This ensures that they'll eventually come upon anyone who has stopped for any reason.

## The benefits of having a sweep

If you lead from the front, you may want to have someone ride *sweep*, meaning a helper who stays at the back of the group. On most rides, the chief advantage of having a sweep is that the leader knows when everyone has arrived at a regrouping point (assuming no one in the middle of the group missed a turn). However, if you have unusually slow riders, mechanical problems, or an accident on your ride, a good sweep can be invaluable.

If you're leading a short, slow ride, which will attract a disproportionate number of inexperienced riders, having **any** sweep is better than having **no** sweep. Ideally, though, you should try to find someone who can successfully change a tire, who doesn't pass out

at the sight of blood, and who will happily slow down and encourage the riders who are having a tough time on the hills.

## After the ride

Immediately after the ride, you should thank riders for coming along and ask for comments or suggestions. Did riders enjoy the ride? Did they like the route? Is there anything you could have done differently?

When you get home, you should call any rider who was injured or lost during the ride. If you get home too late in the evening to call, be sure you call the next day.

Within a day or two, email or text a photo of the liability waiver to the CBC Ride Coordinator. You can also deliver it in person, if you know you will see the Ride Coordinator soon. Include an Incident Report if you encountered any events of special note (accidents, troublesome riders, threats from passing motorists, births).

**Use of the information on the liability waiver:** The liability waiver exists to legally protect you and the bike club in the event of an accident. If a rider calls you to ask for the phone number of someone else on the ride, **do not** give out that information. Instead, take the name and number of the person making the inquiry, call the other rider, and pass on the inquirer's name and number.

## Handling injuries

### *Handling severe accidents*

**Important!** If a rider has an accident and lands on his or her head, neck, or shoulders, you must consider the possibility of a neck or back injury.

- ***If the person is conscious:*** Ask if the person has neck or back pain, weakness, or loss of limb function or sensation. If so, you should suspect spinal cord injury and have the person stay very still.
- ***If the person is unconscious:*** You have no way to know what injury the person may have suffered, so ***do not move an unconscious person.***
- ***If an unconscious person regains consciousness before help arrives:*** Keep the person as still and quiet as possible. You may need to be firm. Someone who is in shock or suffering a concussion isn't the best judge of what to do at the moment. Be sympathetic but firm.

If someone may have a neck or back injury, you should ***almost never*** move the person. You could cause irreparable damage to the spinal cord, possibly resulting in ***permanent paralysis***. If the injured person is in a roadway, divert or stop traffic rather than move the

person, and wait for help to arrive. In the *rare case* where you must move the injured rider, get help from as many people as possible. Make every effort to maintain the *current* position of the person's back and neck. ***Do not try to straighten someone out.***

### ***What to do if one of your riders has an accident and is injured***

1. ***Stay calm:*** You're no help to the others if you're frantic. Pause, take a deep breath, and survey the situation before you act.
2. ***Divert or stop traffic:*** If the injured rider is in the roadway, have other riders divert or stop traffic until you can determine if the person has a possible neck or back injury. Get all other riders and their bicycles off the road. As stated above, if you determine that the person has a possible neck or back injury, continue to divert or hold up traffic until help arrives. ***Do not move the person.***
3. ***Determine if the person is injured seriously enough to require medical attention:*** The injured rider should get medical attention if he or she:
  - Is bleeding heavily.
  - Has a head injury and lost consciousness even briefly.
  - Can't remember what happened.
  - Has obvious pain when moving an injured limb.
  - Has trouble opening his or her jaw.
4. ***If necessary, send someone for help:*** If there is *any* question about whether professional medical attention is necessary, call 911 immediately. If you are in an area with poor cell service and you need to send someone to call, make sure the person who is going can accurately describe where you are. If possible, send two riders: one to direct the ambulance to your location (if necessary), and another who can return to the group when 911 has been reached, so you and the others know that help is on the way.

**Important!** If you have an emergency and you aren't near a phone, remember that bus and cab drivers, utility crews, and construction crews all have radios that they can use to call for help. In addition, practically every passerby is likely to be carrying a cell phone.

5. ***Care for and reassure the injured rider until help arrives:*** Be as helpful as possible given the situation and the available materials. In particular, keep the person as warm and dry as possible. Regardless of the rider's condition, act calmly, speak in reassuring tones, and be sure that everyone around you does the same. Ask everyone who isn't helping to stand well back, so the injured rider isn't looking up into a mob of worried or horrified faces. Also, caution the others not to discuss the rider's injuries; no one who is injured wants to hear the words "Wow! Look at all that *blood!*"
6. ***Make sure the person's contact information and helmet get into the ambulance:*** If an injured rider is taken away in an ambulance, be sure the rider's contact information and helmet go along. Someone at the hospital will probably want to examine the helmet to determine the likelihood of head injuries.

Ideally, you'll get the ambulance crew to take the rider's bike, too, so you don't need to worry about it.

**Important!** Be sure *you* know the rider's name and contact information, so you can call later to check on his or her condition, send a get-well card, return the rider's bike, and file an Incident Report with the club office.

### ***Other concerns in the event of a severe accident***

In addition to taking care of the injured rider, you need to be concerned about the other riders and about the injured rider's bike and gear:

***Continuing the ride:*** You may need to continue the ride before the injured rider has recovered enough to start riding again or before the ambulance has arrived. For example, if it is evening and you're running out of daylight, you'll need to get the other riders back to the starting point. You shouldn't leave the injured rider alone unless he or she is clearly all right and has a way to get back to the starting point or back home. If the other riders can find their way back to the starting point, you and someone who knows first aid should stay with the injured rider. Otherwise, you should ask for volunteers to stay -- again including someone who knows first aid.

***What to do with the injured rider's bike and gear:*** If you need to leave the rider's bike where it is, lock it up and take all of the removable gear with you (bike bags, headlights, and so on). Return for the bike as soon as possible (preferably before nightfall), and let the rider and the club office know that you have it. Alternatively, you may be able to leave the bike at a nearby fire station or bike shop, or at the home of one of the local residents.

### ***Who to notify in the event of an accident***

The liability waiver should include a line for an emergency contact phone number. If an injured rider is taken to the hospital unconscious, and if the person provided an emergency contact phone number, call that number immediately and calmly explain what happened. If the rider is conscious, he or she can decide who to contact and when. If someone was seriously injured, call the CBC President and the Road Coordinator as soon as possible. The club should have Incident Report and Witness Report forms. You should fill out an Incident Report form and send it to the Road Coordinator even if the incident didn't require a trip to the hospital. In addition, you should have any witnesses fill out Witness Report forms and return them to you so you can send them to the Road Coordinator along with the Incident Report form.

### ***Hypothermia***

If you're riding in cold or wet weather, keep an eye on all of your riders to ensure that no one is suffering from hypothermia. Mild hypothermia is characterized by shivering, and can be treated by getting the person out of the cold and into dry clothes. If there's nowhere to get out of the cold, try sharing body heat. More severe cases are characterized

by confusion and lack of coordination. In this case you need to get the person to medical care.

### ***Heat exhaustion and heat stroke***

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke can be caused by riding in hot weather or by dressing inappropriately when riding in cooler weather. As a cyclist dress so you can dissipate heat and perspiration. In addition, drink plenty of fluids, so you don't become dehydrated.

**Heat exhaustion** is characterized by pale, clammy skin, profuse perspiration, and extreme tiredness or weakness. The person may have a headache and may vomit. With heat exhaustion, the person's body temperature is approximately normal. The treatment for heat exhaustion is rest. If the person is alert, offer oral fluids, preferably water or sports drinks. Don't give the person coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages.

**Heat stroke** is far more dangerous. The body's temperature control system has stopped working, so the person doesn't sweat anymore. Body temperature may rise so far that brain damage may result. The symptoms of heat stroke include hot, red skin; no perspiration; extremely high body temperature; dizziness; nausea; headache; rapid pulse; and confusion, disorientation, or unconsciousness. Get the person out of the heat immediately, and cool his or her body quickly. Soak the person in cool but not cold water, or pour water over the body. Stop and observe the person for 10 minutes, then cool some more if the person's body temperature is still above 102°. If the person is alert, offer oral fluids, preferably water or sports drinks. Don't give the person coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages. If heat stroke develops, the rider will need medical care, possibly including intravenous fluids.

### ***Road rash***

If one of your riders falls and leaves some skin on the pavement, the person should clean the wound thoroughly, apply some antiseptic cream or ointment, and cover it with clean gauze. If there isn't a nearby source of clean water, using water from water bottles is better than not cleaning the wound at all. If the edges of a deep cut won't fit back together or if the wound is in a place where motion will prevent it from healing, the rider should get medical attention as soon as possible. For open cuts or abrasions, the rider should seek medical care if he or she hasn't had a tetanus immunization in the last five years.

### ***What to carry in a first-aid kit***

If you decide to carry a first-aid kit for the occasional minor injury, here are some suggestions on what to include:

- Large gauze squares for cleaning road rash or as protection from further harm.
- A roll of gauze for covering larger areas of rash.
- Non-adherent sterile pads.
- Antiseptic cream or ointment.

- A roll of tape to secure bandages.
- Band-Aids® for small cuts and blisters.
- Second Skin for open blisters.
- Ibuprofen or Tylenol® to minimize swelling or general minor pain.
- A triangular bandage.
- Antihistamine, in case someone has an allergic reaction.
- Latex gloves.

**Note:** If you have first-aid training, you may want to add other items to your first-aid kit, for example, Epinephrine®, which is good for severe asthma, as well as for bee stings or any other anaphylactic reaction. This depends on your level of knowledge and your willingness to carry the extra weight.

### ***Getting first-aid training***

If you're interested, first-aid training is readily available. For information on more extensive training, call the local Red Cross chapter. Some technical colleges also offer excellent first-aid courses, which are taught by experienced emergency medical technicians.

## **Handling other problems**

Here are some problems that you may encounter on your rides and some suggestions on how to handle them.

### **Riding in the rain**

In a light rain, you can probably keep riding, but you need to be especially careful on down hills, wet leaves, railroad tracks, road markings, and metal bridge decks. In a rain that's heavy enough to affect visibility, you should consider stopping **off the road** until the rain slows. However, standing around somewhere while you're wet and cold can be a good way to get hypothermia. In a heavy rain, you're probably best off finding a nice, warm place to wait until the weather improves. However, be sure you have the permission of the proprietor; be careful not to inconvenience other customers. If it's an eatery or convenience store, be sure you and your riders buy something. Also, recognize that the weather may not improve before sunset, and that you may have to set off in the rain again.

### **Avoiding lightning**

If you happen to encounter lightning, take immediate defensive action:

- Where possible, find shelter in a building or in a fully enclosed metal vehicle such as a car, truck, or van with the windows closed.
- Avoid water.
- Avoid metal objects such as *bicycles*, electric wires, fences, machinery, railroad tracks, tent poles, and so on.
- Don't stop beneath small open-sided rain shelters or isolated trees.
- Avoid hilltops, open spaces, ditches, and depressions.

**Important!** If you need to take shelter, make every effort to keep your riders calm. You don't want folks crashing into one another in a mad rush to get away from the lightning.

If your hair is standing up, you have a tingling sensation, the count between flash and bang is less than five seconds, or lightning is striking nearby, you should:

- Remove all metal objects.
- Crouch down, and put your feet together and your hands on your knees.
- Avoid direct contact with other people.

## **Dangerous drivers**

If you have trouble with a dangerous driver, get everyone off the road, and wait until the driver goes away. Don't antagonize the driver in any way. In addition, **get the vehicle license number and a description of the driver**, and contact the police. If you can't describe the driver, the owner of the car can simply claim not to have been driving the car at the time of the incident. If someone happens to be carrying a camera, this would be a good time to use it.

# Tips for safe riding

## Helmets

- Always wear a CPSC-, ANSI- or Snell-approved bicycle helmet. (Helmets are required on all CBC rides and are required by law in many places.)

## Traffic regulations

- Observe all traffic laws. Your bicycle is legally considered a vehicle, so you're subject to the same traffic laws as the drivers of motorized vehicles.
- Use hand and voice signals when turning or stopping.
- Ride with traffic. Motorists don't look for bicycles going the "wrong way."
- Don't wear headphones while you're cycling. It's dangerous and, in some places, it's illegal.
- When riding at night, state law requires you to have, at a minimum, a white front head lamp and a red rear reflector, each visible from a distance of 500 feet. It's also a good idea to have a red taillight or blinker and to wear reflective clothing and safety vests to increase visibility. Flashing lights are not legal headlights.

## Hazards

- Make eye contact with drivers so you know that they've seen you.
- Cross railroad tracks at a 90° angle.
- Look ahead for road hazards (glass, potholes, wide cracks, metal grates, gravel, and so on), and point them out to other riders. This is extra important when the road is wet.
- Check for traffic yourself. Scan the road in front of you, behind you, and around you.
- Watch for car doors opening in your path.
- Watch for walkers, runners, and children in or near your path.
- Watch for dogs. Warn other riders if you may use pepper spray.
- Use voice and hand signals to communicate turning, slowing, stopping, etc. with other riders, especially when you're riding close together.

# Day-of-ride checklist

## Stuff to bring

### ***Mandatory***

- ☐ Your own bike and helmet
- ☐ Copies of the CBC Liability Waiver and the CBC Incident Report
- ☐ A couple of pens

### ***Optional***

- ☐ Food and full water bottles
- ☐ Basic tools, pump and tire gauge, extra tube, patch kit, and tire levers
- ☐ Rudimentary first-aid kit
- ☐ Bike computer to monitor your pace
- ☐ Cell phone
- ☐ Membership cards
- ☐ Extra helmets (if you have spares)
- ☐ Rags for cleaning up after repairs
- ☐ Money for food or drinks

## Things to check on before the ride

- ☐ Does everyone have a helmet?
- ☐ Has everyone signed the liability waiver?
- ☐ How many riders do you have?
- ☐ Does anyone have special medical conditions (allergy to bee stings, asthma, etc.).

## The pre-ride announcement

- ☐ Introductions
- ☐ Welcome to new riders
- ☐ Signatures on the liability waiver
- ☐ Pace of the ride
- ☐ Whether the ride will stick together and, if not, where the first regroup spot (or lunch) will be
- ☐ The route
- ☐ Ride safely
- ☐ Obey traffic regulations
- ☐ Ride single-file in traffic
- ☐ Use hand and voice signals
- ☐ Watch out for other cyclists
- ☐ Special equipment required (lights?)
- ☐ Keep the ride leader informed