

18 March 2010

Cyclists: claim your lane, says IAM

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) has urged cyclists to make themselves seen and to “claim their lane”, moving out into the middle of the lane when approaching a junction or parked cars.

Duncan Pickering, IAM Cycling Development Manager, said: “There has been some debate as to whether cyclists should stick to the kerb or push out into the road when riding in built-up areas. Our advice to cyclists, based on a comprehensive study, is to stay near to the kerb on long even stretches, but to assert yourself when approaching a junction, pushing out into the road and putting yourself in the direct view of drivers.

“Sticking to the kerb where drivers are not necessarily looking means they are less likely to see you.”

Studies have shown that drivers primarily pay attention to the major stream of traffic when navigating a junction, paying little attention to auxiliary roads which are more likely to have cyclists on them.

“Drivers are more likely to notice bikes travelling in the same direction as the oncoming traffic and, when turning left, mainly focus their attention on cars coming from the right, as they don’t see the left as posing a particular threat. This means they fail to see cyclists from the left early enough,” added Mr Pickering.

The IAM, the UK’s largest independent road safety charity, recommends cyclists:

- Take up a primary position around 75-100m before reaching a junction, in the centre of the lane, providing it is safe to do so. This move will mean that drivers exiting the junction will be more likely to see the cyclist as they are in the same traffic flow as more hazardous vehicles.
- Take the “secondary position” when cycling along a straight stretch of road which is clear of junctions and parked cars.
- Keep a sensible distance, about half a meter, from the kerb to avoid hazards such as slippery drain-covers.
- Remember it is not always sensible or appropriate to take the centre of the lane especially if traffic is heavy.

While a lack of awareness on the part of some motorists is no doubt a huge factor in car/bike collisions, it pays for the cyclist as the more vulnerable road user to ride to be seen where possible.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Based on findings of two academic studies:

- Collisions involving cyclists on Britain's roads: establishing the causes. Transport Research Laboratory (2009)
- Accident Analysis & Prevention (1996)

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