

Motorists should look out for cyclists this winter

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Winter is usually associated with misty conditions, torrid rain and especially with all the road closures and upgrades in Mitchell's Plain, motorists should be on the lookout for cyclists. The schools also closed for the June holidays and you can expect cyclists on the roads.

Neil Robinson, CEO of the Pedal Power Association, gave insight into what motorists should do to keep them and cyclists safe.

As much as drivers need to be more cyclist-aware, follow road rules and drive safely, vice versa also applies. He came up with some tips to help cyclists and car drivers avoid incidents on our roads.

“The PPA is committed to promoting cycling and the safety of cyclists. Our influence and interest spans across recreational road and off-road cycling events and initiatives; supporting cycling community projects; lobbying for the interests of cyclists’ safety and rights; assisting communities to develop through cycling; and encouraging our youth to cycle.

"Our safe cycling campaign Stay Wider of the Rider launched in Cape Town in 2014 and is now a national campaign. Thus far, we have handed out thousands of reflective bibs in all provinces and our many awareness campaigns are targeted to educate drivers to keep cyclists safe on our roads,” says Robinson.

Here are our top tips to help cyclists and car drivers avoid incidents on our roads.

CYCLISTS

- Be sure you and your bicycle are as visible as possible when on the road. Wear

bright clothing and use lights.

- As a legal road user, always obey the rules of the road.

- Ride single file and use clear hand signals when turning. Chappies is extremely congested this time of the year so please keep a single file, it’s the law.

- Don’t cycle on the pavement unless it’s a designated cycle path.

- Let’s promote a culture of caring. Acting like the road is your own personal raceway and everyone else is an obstacle, just gives all cyclists a bad name.

- Avoid riding with ear phones and be aware of your surroundings.

- Avoid hotspot areas if riding alone, we recommend riding in a group.

MOTORISTS

He also appealed to motorists to keep cyclists safe and here are his tips for the motorists:

- Avoid "dooring" cyclists: Dooring means to open your door into a cyclist riding past. It can also be fatal and happens more than you’d expect. Don’t open any doors without checking there aren’t any cyclists behind you. You could easily sweep them clean off their bikes and it won’t be pretty. Think about the width of your door when it’s open; you easily have a 1-1,5m mobile barrier swinging into the road each time you get in or out of the car.

- Realise cyclists are vulnerable: Driving a vehicle hugely heavier and more powerful than a bicycle and in any impact, the cyclist will be the loser. Use mirrors as cyclists may overtake slow-moving traffic on either side. They may sometimes need to change direction suddenly, so be aware of this and observe any indications they give such as looking over their shoulder.

- Allow plenty of space: When overtaking a cyclist you’re required to give them as much room as you would a car. They may need to swerve to avoid hazards. Always anticipate that there may be a pothole, oil, water or some other obstruction.

- Don’t drive too closely behind a cyclist because you may not be able to stop in time if they come off their bike or do something abruptly. Unless you have an entire clear, empty lane in which to pass, slow down and wait until there is room to pass. Pass them slowly!

- Drive slowly on low-visible roads: On rural roads or those with limited visibility remember that a cyclist could be around the next corner. It could also be an elderly person, a child, an animal or a tractor turning into a field. Reducing your speed reduces the risk of something happening. It is not possible to see ahead of hills and curves, so slow down when you’re not sure what’s on the other side. Make sure you can stop the car in half the distance you can see to be clear. At night the need to do so is more exaggerated.