

Florida's Bicycle Safety Laws

LEGAL STATUS—BICYCLES ARE VEHICLES

In Florida, the bicycle is legally defined as a vehicle. Bicyclists have the same rights to the roadways and must obey the same traffic laws as the operators of other vehicles. These laws include stopping for stop signs and red lights, riding with the flow of traffic, using lights at night, and yielding the right-of-way when entering a roadway.

With few exceptions, there is only one road and it is up to bicyclists and motorists to treat each other with care and respect. Strict adherence to the law is the foundation for this respect.

TRAFFIC LAW HIGHLIGHTS

Bicycle Regulations (see Section 316.2065, F.S.)

- A bicyclist must obey all traffic controls and signals.
- A bicyclist must use a fixed, regular seat for riding.
- No bicycle may be used to carry more persons at one time than the number for which it is designed or equipped, except that an adult rider may carry a child securely attached to his or her person in a backpack or sling. Except when a child is in a backpack or sling, a bicycle rider must carry any passenger who is a child under 4 years of age, or who weighs 40 pounds or less, in a seat or carrier that is designed to carry a child of that age or size and that secures and protects the child from the moving parts of the bicycle. A bicycle rider may not allow a passenger to remain in a child seat or carrier on a bicycle when the rider is not in immediate control of the bicycle.
- A bicycle rider or passenger who is under 16 years of age must wear a bicycle helmet fastened securely to the head. The helmet must meet the standards of the American National Standards Institute (Z90.4) or Snell Memorial Foundation (1984) or Consumer Product Safety Commission (1997).
- At least one hand must be kept on the handlebars while riding.
- Parents and guardians must not knowingly allow a child or minor ward to violate any provision of this section.
- Every bicycle must be equipped with a brake or brakes which allow the rider to stop within 25 feet from a speed of 10 miles per hour on dry, level, clean pavement.

Sidewalk Riding (see Section 316.2065, F.S.)

- When riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks, a bicyclist has the same rights and duties as a pedestrian.
- A bicyclist riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and must give an audible signal before passing.
- Some local governments prohibit sidewalk riding. Local law enforcement agencies can provide copies of local ordinances. (*For example, the City of St. Augustine prohibits bicycle use on sidewalks.*)

Lighting (see Section 316.2065, F.S.)

- A bicycle operated between sunset and sunrise must be equipped with a lamp on the front exhibiting a white light visible from 500 feet to the front and both a red reflector and a lamp on the rear exhibiting a red light visible from 600 feet to the rear.
- Additional lighting is permitted and recommended.

Roadway Position (see Section 316.2065, F.S.)

- A bicyclist who is not traveling at the same speed of other traffic must ride as close as practicable to the right hand curb or edge of the roadway. A bicyclist may leave the right-most portion of the road in the following situations: when passing, making a left turn, to avoid hazards, or when a lane is too narrow for a bicycle and a car to share safely.
- A bicyclist operating on a one-way street with two or more traffic lanes may ride as close to the left hand edge of the roadway as practicable.
- Riding in single file is required except on bike paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles, or when two people riding side-by-side within one lane will not impede traffic flow.

Left Turns (see Section 316.151[1][b] and [c], F.S.)

- A bicyclist intending to make a vehicle left turn is entitled to full use of the lane from which the turn is made. After scanning, signaling, and moving to the center of that lane, the bicyclist must check the signal, then proceed when it is green and safe to do so.
- In addition to the normal vehicle left turn, a bicyclist may proceed through the right-most portion of the intersection and turn as close to the curb or edge as possible at the far side. After complying with any official traffic control device, the bicyclist may proceed in the new direction of travel.
- Another option available to a bicyclist is to dismount and walk through the intersection in the crosswalk like a pedestrian.

Signaling Turns

(see Section 316.155[2] and 316.157[2], F.S.)

- A signal of intention to turn must be given during the last 100 feet traveled by the vehicle before turning. If a bicyclist needs both hands for control, the signal need not be given continuously.
- A bicyclist may signal intent to turn right either by extending the left hand and arm upward or by extending the right hand and arm horizontally to the right side of the bicycle.

Headsets (see Section 316.304, F.S.)

- A bicyclist must not wear a headset, headphone, or other listening device other than a hearing aid when riding. Wearing a headset blocks out important audio cues needed to detect the presence of other traffic.

Civil Penalties

(see Section 318.18[1], [2] and [3], F.S.)

- Civil penalties may be issued for violations of bicycle laws as well as for moving and non-moving violations.

Limited Access Facilities and Interstate Highways (see Section 316.091, F.S.)

- Bicycles shall not operate upon a limited access facility or interstate highway. (This provision does not apply to Jacksonville Expressway System.)

Local Ordinances

- Local governments can adopt ordinances regulating bicycle riding. Some local governments may also have registration and licensing ordinances. Sidewalk riding may be prohibited entirely or only in certain areas such as business districts. Local law enforcement agencies can provide copies of local ordinances.