

# Safety Check ✓

From the Safety Chick

A split second  
A fraction of an inch  
A blink of an eye

An accident happens.

Every year we hear of fellow riders being involved in cycling accidents. Novices, experienced and professional riders (see Tour de France highlights) are involved in accidents. Riders come in contact with the pavement, vehicles, railroad tracks and other riders. Just as in any auto or household accident, no one intends for it to happen. Sometimes we don't even remember how it happened. Suddenly we are off the bike, maybe off the road and wondering how did I get here. To avoid the experience, perhaps we can learn from others.

## Story 1

October 2005

Weekend Club Ride

Incident: Rider stopped quickly and went over the handlebars

Just after making a left turn onto a busy street, he was riding a short distance, less than a tenth of a mile and then turning right, going about 3 mph. There was not a light or stop sign at either corner, numerous vehicles were in the area. Between the two turns, he had to cross railroad tracks. The rider thought taking the sidewalk across the tracks would be safer than the busy road. Once on the sidewalk, he realized the pavement on either side of the tracks was broken. Seeing that it would be difficult to ride over the surface he stopped . . . quickly. He flew over the handlebars, head first, landing on his face. The group had gone ahead of him a bit and was not aware that he had fallen. By the time he had righted himself and the bike, some of the riders had ridden back to check on him. His face was bleeding and he had jammed a finger. He made the decision to ride home, alone. His advice:

1. The road is safer than the sidewalk
2. Don't stick your arm out to break the fall. (The proper way to fall is tuck and roll)
3. He was not the best judge to determine if he could ride home alone. He'd been through a trauma and suffered mild shock.

## Story 2

June 2006

Organized, Invitational Ride with a large number of riders

Incident: Rider fell when her front wheel came in contact with bike in front of her.

Riding in a large pack, 4-5 riders abreast, riding 20+ miles per hour on a flat surface the rider's front wheel was approximately 12 inches behind the back wheel of the rider in front of her. Riding near the front of the pack, suddenly the two riders ahead of her stopped. There was no apparent reason to stop. Neither rider announced their intention to stop or slow. They just stopped. Our rider's front wheel hit the bike in front of her; our rider's front wheel turned sharply and she fell. (for newbies, the back rider

nearly always falls and the front rider is unaffected.) Both of the riders in front of her rode on not even realizing there was a problem. Our rider's helmeted (fortunately) head hit the pavement, no damage. Unfortunately, her shoulder also hit the pavement, double break to the right collarbone. Her advice:

1. Never ride in a pack, especially with riders you do not know.
2. Always wear your helmet

Story 3

June 2006

Weekend Club ride

Incident: Rider stopped suddenly and went over the handlebars

Riding up a small hill, the rider was steering with her right hand, using her left hand to flip her cue sheet. She was fumbling with the cue sheet a bit, trying to keep from dropping it. Suddenly, this simple action, a motion she has done many times before distracted her. As she was trying to catch the cue sheet, she adjusted her right hand and unintentionally applied the front brakes. She went over the handlebars landing face first. Her injuries will require dental work. Her advice: Need to make an adjustment, stop the bike for the 30 seconds it may take and take care of it. Then, proceed with ride.

Tailwinds

Many thanks to Gary Gilbert, Barb Hackel and Christine VanDornick for sharing their experiences and contributing to this article.