

Bicycle mishaps on rise

Campus area is hazardous

By Bob Waite
Emerald Contributor

While spring's fair weather signals good times for bicyclists, it may also bring more bicycle accidents, according to area public safety staff.

Suzi Hunter, University crime prevention officer, and Diane Bishop, City of Eugene bicycle coordinator, said that actual bicycle accident statistics are difficult to gather because many of the accidents are not reported.

Both agree, however, the number of accidents may rise.

Serious bicycle accidents reported recently in Corvallis, Cottage Grove and Creswell may indicate a trend, Bishop said.

"We see several (bicycle accident victims) per week now, two to three times the number of people we see in the winter months," Dr. James Jackson of the Student Health Center said.

Hunter said some of the worst problem areas on campus are the breezeways and sidewalks marked with notices for bicyclists to dismount because they are areas with the greatest non-street pedestrian traffic.

"The dismount areas are a joke. People bicycle on them all the time. I can't stand out there and write tickets eight hours a day," Hunter said, emphasizing the areas are posted in the interest of everyone's safety and not as a reason to write tickets.

Bishop and Hunter agreed that hospital records are the best indicator of bicycle accident trends.

"We feel at least 70 percent of all bicycle accidents are not reported. We received statistics for July of 1988 from Sacred Heart Hospital. There were 53 bike accidents, only eight involving motor vehicles and only 12 reported to the Eugene police department," Bishop said.

One way bicyclists can avoid accidents is by riding in accordance with Oregon traffic laws, Hunter and Bishop said.

"Oregon law requires bicyclists to ride with lights and reflectors at night," Hunter said.

Both said many reported accidents involve bicyclists riding on sidewalks. Motorists do not look for bikes on sidewalks when leaving driveways, Bishop said, and this leads to collisions.

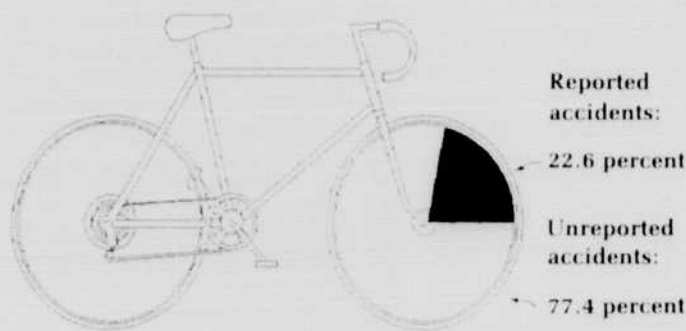


Photo by Sean Poston

Bicyclists not paying heed to dismount signs on campus are a major cause of accidents, according to Office of Public Safety officer Suzi Hunter.

Bike bashing

Most serious bicycle accidents go unreported to the police. In July 1988, Sacred Heart General Hospital treated 53 bicycle injury cases. Of these, only 12 were reported to Eugene Police Department.



Graphic by Bob Waite

The best garment for cyclists is a helmet, all three agreed.

"The big problem with the bike is, if you get in a very serious accident, you're a dead duck," Jackson said, adding that bicyclists are susceptible to

head injuries and helmets can prevent injuries or death.

Motorists should know that if they are involved in a bicycle accident and there are injuries, they are required by law to report it, Bishop said.

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