

Be aware of cyclists and share the road

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Elsie Ross, 4 is all smiles at the bike rodeo.



Jessica Deeks, Kanata EMC

Evan Guo, 7, getting his bike tuned up by Brian Howeson from Kunststadt Sports at the Stephen Leacock Public School Bike Rodeo on Saturday.

Jessica Deeks, Kanata EMC

EMC News - With the spring weather, more cyclists of all ages are set to hit the streets with an added sense of adventure. However, Cst. Ryan Strotmann, Kanata/Stittsville Community Police officer with the Ottawa Police Service warns that both motorists and cyclists should be extra careful.

"Cycling is a fun, healthy and inexpensive way to get around, whether you cycle to and from work or school, or recreationally on the weekends. You'll enjoy it most when your bicycle-handling traffic skills are in good shape," said Strotmann.

This week there have been three tragic cycling accidents. On Sunday, May 16, a 16 year-old boy was killed after being struck by a motorcycle at the intersection of Woodroffe and Carling. Witnesses report he was doing tricks. In Montreal three cyclists were killed and three others were injured after being struck by a pick-up truck, and another cyclist was killed in the Laurentian Mountains.

In July 2009, five cyclists were injured after being struck by a van on March Road.

According to a mother who recently called the EMC, asking for her name not to be used, she said her son was struck by a vehicle as he was crossing the road. The driver checked to see if the child was okay but did not follow them home. Neither the mother nor the driver reported the accident to the police.

Strotmann advises that any accident should be reported to the police. However, people should use common sense and if a child is involved or if there are injuries it should definitely be reported to authorities.

He explains that it is the responsibility of both the cyclist and the driver to be aware when they are on the roads at this time of the year.

"Cyclists need to abide by the same rules of the road as motor vehicles by using proper hand signals, stopping at the lights and not riding on the sidewalk," said Strotmann. "Motorists should slow down, be alert and be aware that there are more bikes and pedestrians out at this time of year because everyone wants to be outside. They need to share the road with cyclists as well."

Strotmann notes that police bike patrols started last month in parks and local trails so they are visible.

"We like getting out on the trails. We are obeying the rules of the road and we are looking for those who may not and we will be educating them. Especially children with helmets, they need to wear them because they save lives."

Strotmann reminds residents that bicycles are vehicles and cyclists have the same rights and duties as motorists. He offers these reminders that are required under the Ontario Highway Traffic Act and Ottawa Traffic and Parking Bylaw:

- wear a helmet (required if under 18),
- stop at all stop signs and red lights,
- signal all lane changes,
- cycle on the right side of the road,
- share the road with other users,
- use lights when riding at night, have a bell/gong or horn,
- don't be a showoff, it's dangerous and foolish.

Strotmann invites all residents to visit the Police Station on June 5 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The building which was officially opened in December 2009, is located at 211 Huntmar and will be open as part of the Open Doors Ottawa program.