

## National Bike Safety Month

PIERRE .Promoting and practicing safe techniques is the first step in preventing bicycle-related injuries and deaths. There were 105 injuries and 1 death involving bicycles in South Dakota in 2003, according to the SD Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Summary. In the United States each year, there is an average of 900 bicycle-related deaths and more than 500,000 bicycle injuries requiring hospital emergency room treatment. Every week 2700 children suffer serious head injuries and every day 2 die in crashes while bicycling.

May is National Bike Month and a good time to remind all parents and bicycle riders that the first and most important step in bicycle safety is wearing a helmet and wearing it correctly. Research shows that properly-worn bike helmets can reduce the risk of serious head and brain injury by as much as 88 percent. Remember the following tips when bicycling:

- Bicycles are vehicles with the same rights, rules and responsibilities as other road users; always share the road.
- On every ride, wear a helmet that meets federal safety standards issued by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. To determine the correct helmet size, measure the rider's head with a tape measure.
- Adjust the helmet pads and straps so the fit is snug and level. The helmet should be worn 1-2 finger widths above the head, not tilted back on the crown or pulled low over the forehead.
- If a helmet has been dropped hard or been in a crash, replace it.
- Make sure the bicycle is the right size. When sitting on the seat with hands on the handlebar, the rider should be able to place the ball of each foot on the ground.
- Check for traffic and be aware of the traffic around you. Over 70 percent of car-bicycle crashes occur at driveways or other intersections. Before riding into traffic: stop, look left, right, left again, and over your shoulder.
- Ride single file in the same direction as other traffic and always use hand signals.
- Wear bright clothes to be visible and avoid biking at night.
- Adults and parents should be good role models and wear helmets too.

The *Don't Thump Your Melon* program is offering a limited number of helmets through uniformed officers who are promoting bicycle safety to children and youth. The program will also continue to furnish *Don't Thump Your Melon* T-shirts for uniformed officers to give to children caught wearing their helmets when bike riding, roller blading, or skateboarding to reward them and reinforce the importance of wearing helmets.

For more information about helmet and bicycle safety visit the department's *Don't Thump Your Melon* web site [www.state.sd.us/dps/hs/DTYM.htm](http://www.state.sd.us/dps/hs/DTYM.htm). *Don't Thump Your Melon* is a partnership involving the Department of Health, the Office of Highway Safety, Emergency Medical Services for Children, Rapid City Regional Hospital Systems, Avera McKennan Hospital and Sioux Valley Hospital and Health Systems.