

Aflac Iron Girl Columbia Participants

Bicycling Safety and Responsibilities

The Bicycling Advocates of Howard County and The Columbia Triathlon Association, Inc. would like to take the opportunity to wish each and every one of you success in your training, and racing in the AFLAC Iron Girl Columbia Triathlon.

While training for a triathlon or any bike ride, whether this is your first one or your hundredth, we would like to remind everyone of the necessity to practice safety, especially while riding on the open roads. Many of you will be practicing the course over the next several weeks and months leading up to the event and while the bike courses for these races are challenging and fun, it can also become crowded and a cause for concern. Increased housing development along the bike course over the past few years has resulted in a significant traffic increase and as a result more incidents with cyclists.

By following these steps you will greatly decrease your chances of encountering any trouble on the roads:

- In addition to food, hydration, spare tube, tire levers, and pump or CO2 - always carry identification, a cell phone and a few dollars in cash.
- Keep single file especially in the most heavily trafficked areas of the course Rt 108, Homewood and Folly Quarter, roads.
- Stay as close to the shoulder as possible. Where there is no shoulder stay as close to the white line as possible. Warn riders ahead of cars coming from behind ('car back') and when they are attempting to pass ('passing') so people can move as far to the right as feasible.
- Always wear clothing that allows drivers to see you.
- NEVER wear headphones or use your iPods while riding.
- Use reflective gear (i.e. lights - front and back, reflective tape, etc.), especially in early morning and at dusk.
- Always wear a helmet. It should bear a label inside that reads CPSC certified. Any helmet is good for one crash or hard impact, so use care and remember your head is the most important part about You!!
- Always have your bicycle well maintained. If you have not learned basic bicycle maintenance please contact a local bike shop. Most offer maintenance classes for the public.
- When changing a flat or other maintenance issues on the road get as far away from the actual road as possible.

- Pay attention to what is going on in front and in back of you, as well as the sides.
- Constantly scan the area ahead of you for potential problems with potholes, glass, sticks, etc. and shout warnings and use appropriate hand signals (point) to warn riders behind you. This will help avoid unexpected movements which make both surrounding cyclists and drivers very nervous - plus the next tire saved might be your own!
- Always slow down when approaching a side street.
- Always assume that a car might be coming out of a driveway, especially when it is hidden.
- NEVER go through a red light, even if there are no cars coming in any direction.
- Learn proper riding techniques. The ability to handle a bicycle well can often help avoid incidents. Learn what drafting really means and use care when riding in packs. Never ride in the aero position while a part of a draft pack.
- If riding in a large group, break the group down into smaller groups of 6-8 individuals with adequate distance (3-4 car lengths) to allow cars to pass safely. Keep it single file.
- Give the person in front of you plenty of space, especially when going downhill.
- Be courteous to drivers by waving them around you and thank them for slowing down behind you.
- If a driver is yelling at you because he/she is angry about something try to ignore them. If they actually endanger you, try to remember their license plate number and contact the police.