

# Vermont Bicycling Laws

Compiled by

## The Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition

### **SAME RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS MOTOR**

**VEHICLES.** Everyone riding a bicycle is granted all of the rights and is subject to all of the duties applicable to operators of vehicles, except as to those provisions which by their very nature can have no application. 23 VSA §1136(c)

**DEFINITION.** "BICYCLE" means every pedal-driven device propelled by human power having two or more wheels on which a person may ride, including a so-called pedal vehicle which may have an enclosed cab. 19 VSA §2301

**PASSING VULNERABLE ROADWAY USERS.** The operator of a motor vehicle approaching or passing a vulnerable user (a pedestrian; a person operating a wheelchair or other personal mobility device, whether motorized or not; a person operating a bicycle or other nonmotorized means of transportation (such as, but not limited to, roller skates, rollerblades, or roller skis); or a person riding, driving, or herding an animal) shall exercise due care, which includes increasing clearance, to pass the vulnerable user safely. 23 VSA §1033(a, b) §4(81). Penalty is 4 points and \$156 fine.

A vehicle shall not pass another from the rear... when approaching or upon the crest of a grade or upon a curve in the highway where the driver's view is in any way obstructed. 23 VSA §1035(b). Penalty is 3 points and \$214 fine.

**HARASSMENT: FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY, CROWDING, AND THROWING OBJECTS.** The operator of a vehicle shall not, in a careless or imprudent manner, approach, pass, or maintain speed unnecessarily close to a vulnerable user and an occupant of a vehicle shall not throw any object or substance at a vulnerable user. 23 VSA §1039(a). Penalty for following too closely is 4 points and \$271 fine, and for throwing objects is 4 points and \$386 fine.

*If you, while bicycling, walking, running, riding a horse, etc. on Vermont's roads, have experienced harassment from a motorist, please report what happened to you and let the police know that you would like the motorist to be cited for violating the "Safe Passing" law. By doing so, you are assisting law enforcement and you are helping to protect others from experiencing what you experienced or worse. If you ignore this kind of behavior on the part of drivers, it will continue. Don't tolerate it. You, as the victim, are a credible witness. Please speak up and save lives!*

**RIDE ON THE RIGHT.** A person operating a bicycle upon a roadway shall exercise due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction and generally shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, but shall ride to the left or in a left lane when:

- (1) preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private roadway or driveway;
- (2) approaching an intersection with a right-turn lane if not turning right at the intersection;
- (3) overtaking another highway user; or
- (4) taking reasonably necessary precautions to avoid hazards or road conditions.

23 VSA §1139(a). Penalty is \$70 fine.

**TWO ABREAST.** Persons riding bicycles upon a roadway may not ride more than two abreast except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. Persons riding two abreast shall not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic and, on a laned roadway, shall ride within a single lane. 23 VSA §1139(b). Penalty is \$70 fine.

**LIGHTS AT NIGHT.** A person shall not operate a bicycle at nighttime from one-half hour after sunset until one-half hour before sunrise unless the bicycle or the bicyclist is equipped with a lamp on the front which emits a white light visible from a distance of at least 500 feet to the front. In addition, bicyclists shall operate during these hours with either a lamp on the rear of the bicycle or bicyclist which emits a flashing or steady red light visible at least 300 feet to the rear, or with reflective rear-facing material or reflectors, or both, with a surface area totaling at least 20 square inches on the bicycle or bicyclist and visible at least 300 feet to the rear. 23 VSA §1141(a). Penalty is \$70 fine.

**HAND SIGNALS.** All signals to indicate change of speed or direction, when given by hand, shall be given from the left side of the vehicle and in the following manner:

- (1) Left turn - Hand and arm extended horizontally.
- (2) Right turn - Hand and arm extended upward. Alternatively, a person operating a bicycle may give a right-turn signal by extending the right hand and arm horizontally and to the right side of the bicycle.
- (3) Stop or decrease speed - Hand and arm extended downward.

*It is not necessary to signal if you need your hands for braking.* 23 VSA §1065(a,b). Penalty is 2 points and \$214 fine.

**NOT REQUIRED TO USE BIKE PATH.** Bicyclists are permitted to use the road, even where there is an adjacent path. 23 VSA §1139(c)

### **RIDING ON SIDEWALKS AND IN CROSSWALKS.**

Some municipalities limit riding on sidewalks, especially for adults or in downtown areas. Bicyclists do not have the right-of-way in crosswalks under state law unless they dismount and walk.

**RIDING ON SHOULDERS.** "Paved road shoulders are considered bicycle lanes" which the statute defines as for preferential use by bicycles. 19 VSA §2301(3)

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This publication is current as of July 1, 2011.*

You can find more information about our advocacy on the home page of the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition website: [www.vtbikeped.org](http://www.vtbikeped.org)

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*Thank you for your support of safe walking, running and bicycling in Vermont!*