

# 9: RIDING AT NIGHT & IN BAD WEATHER

## HOW TO BE SEEN AT NIGHT

Light up! Here's how:

**Reflective orange safety vest:** good for cycling in dark clothes. Don't wear dark clothes with no other light-colored material.

**Rear light:** Not important if you have a good rear reflector. If buying just one light, get a good headlight. Many cyclists like red strobe lights.

**Rear reflectors:** Biggest are best; get one at least three inches wide, make sure it's pointed straight back and not up or down.

Only red is legal but newer amber ones can be 8 times brighter. Reflectors work only if they're clean, so remember to wipe them off!

**Pedal reflectors:** built into front and back.

**Reflective ankle strap**

**Reflective tape:** Use white or yellow in front, yellow or red in back.

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**Strobe light**

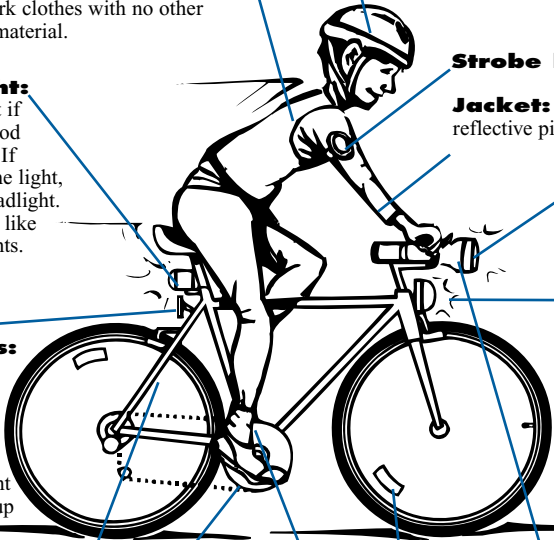
**Jacket:** Bright color, reflective piping in back.

**Flashlight:** In a pinch, tie on with rubber bands or a bungee cord.

**Headlight:** battery-powered LED or halogen. Get the most powerful one you can afford. (Use white or amber, not red.) The newer LED lights don't cost lots and have long battery lives.

Generator lights can be bright, and you don't have to worry about batteries.

**Rechargeable batteries:** If you ride at night a lot, you'll save money and throw away fewer toxic batteries.



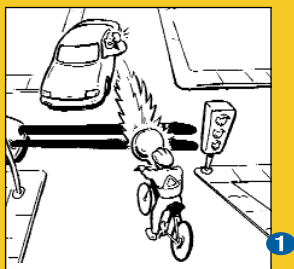
Only three percent of bike rides happen at night—but over half of all cyclists killed get hit while riding at night without lights. Under Chicago's bright street lights you need bike lights to be seen, not to see: At night, Illinois law requires a white front light visible from 500 feet, and a red back reflector or light visible from 100 to 600 feet. That's not much; you can see a car's headlights from 3,000 feet—and that's what most motorists look for. And since your upper body's at eye level, it's important to wear bright stuff at night.

## RIDING AT NIGHT

**Defensive Moves:** At night you can't see where drivers are looking. Also, many drivers are tired, and some are drunk. **Slow down** from your daylight speed. To make sure drivers see you when you're stopped, **flash your lights** by twitching your handlebars back and forth. **1** And **watch cars closely**; be ready to get out of their way.

**Know Your Route:** If you're new at night riding, **take streets where you know the potholes and traffic** so you can focus on riding in the dark. Also, if you're not sure about nighttime crime in a neighborhood, ask someone who knows the area—or don't ride alone.

**Night Blindness:** **2** Don't bike at night if your visual acuity's worse than 20/40 with glasses or contacts, or you can read a far-away sign or address okay in daylight but not at night. See a doctor to be sure.



## RIDING IN RAIN & SNOW

**Wet Streets:** Wet streets can throw you. Watch out for:

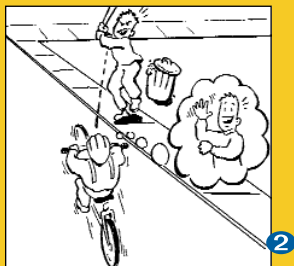
► **Metal, paint, and leaves.** Metal-grate bridges, sewer and manhole covers, painted pavement, and leaves get slippery when wet. Don't turn or brake on them. On bridges, if you have thin or smooth tires don't ride across; **3** put both feet on the road and "scooter" across, or walk your bike on the sidewalk.

► **Puddles.** Don't ride through a puddle if you can't see the bottom. It could be a deep pothole that'll sink you.

► **Start of rain.** Don't race to beat the rain when it starts; it's when streets are slickest, because oil on the road spreads before it washes away. Turn slower and with less lean.

**Slow Down:** Remember that in rain or snow motorists and cyclists can't see as well as usual. And it takes longer for them to stop. To be safe, go slower than normal.

**Braking:** When brake pads are wet they take up to ten times longer to work. Dry them by applying your brakes far ahead of where you want to slow down, causing your pads to wipe the rims. To dry them faster, "pump" the brakes by applying them, then letting go, over and over.



**Snow:** Snow crews usually clear major streets within a day of a major snowfall. Walk your bike to one and get going. Other concerns:

- ▶ **Ice.** Snow hides ice on the pavement, so avoid riding on snow. ④ Walk your bike if you must.
- ▶ **Build-up.** With piles of snow on the right, ride in the middle of the right lane. ⑤ Let cars pass in heavy traffic; otherwise, if drivers give you the horn give them the “slow” arm signal (see page 13)—or shake your head firmly—and keep going.

## DRESSING FOR COLD & WET WEATHER

Chicagoans who bicycle in the cold and rain aren’t nuts; they’re just dressed right. But how?

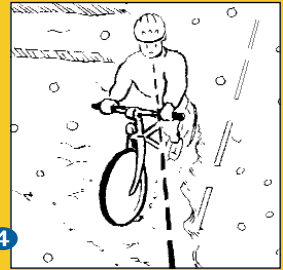
### Protection for Cold & Wet Weather:

If your clothes keep out rain they might also seal your sweat in. To vent perspiration, wear a jacket or poncho that lets air in from the bottom, back, or sides. And fenders work best to keep your legs, feet, and back dry. To learn more on winter cycling tips and events go to [www.bikewinter.org](http://www.bikewinter.org). ⑥

**Layers for Cold:** You don’t need a whole new set of clothes to bike in the cold. Instead, wear a sweatshirt or jacket and add t-shirts, light sweaters, and tights or long johns in layers as weather gets colder. By wearing light layers you can also remove outer clothes if you warm up while cycling. (Overheating can make you sick.) If you sweat, make the layer closest to your skin a non-absorbing material (synthetic, not cotton) that’ll let sweat evaporate as you ride.

Try different clothing to find what makes you comfortable at different temperatures and in the rain. In extreme cold or wind chill, cover your hands, feet, and ears well. Here are some other ideas:

Temperature	What to Wear
<b>Cool:</b> 50	Light jacket or windbreaker; long pants; light gloves.
<b>Cold:</b> 40	Thicker socks (or a second pair); heavier gloves; hat.
<b>Freezing:</b> 30	Sweater or another torso layer; glove liners under gloves; neck gaiter, turtleneck, or scarf; headband or earmuffs; add knee socks; heavy shoes or shoe covers.
<b>Below Freezing:</b> 10	Another torso and leg layer; mitten shells instead of (or over) gloves.



④



⑤

**CHICAGO**  
**BIKE**   
**WINTER**

⑥ [www.bikewinter.org](http://www.bikewinter.org)

# EQUIPPING YOU AND YOUR BIKE FOR RAIN AND SNOW

## Wear bright colors:

yellow, orange, or fluorescent pink.

**Eyes:** Ski goggles that seal tightly against skin are less likely to fog up.

**Ears:** Wide headbands and even earmuffs fit under your helmet.

**Neck:** Wool scarf, cotton turtleneck, or neck gaiter keeps icy air from blasting down your shirt.

**Hands:** Use gardening or fishing gloves with wool or synthetic liners, ski gloves, or thick ragwool hunters' gloves.

**Crotch:** To prevent unusual frostbite, avoid porous warm-up pants.

**Legs:** When it's cold but dry, wear loose-fitting, average-weight pants like jeans. When it's colder use long underwear or two pairs of tights. In wet weather wear synthetic underwear with one or two pairs of tights.

**Feet:** Wear heavy wool socks or two pairs of socks. Knee socks protect shins from cold from below. With socks for warmth and fenders for dryness, wear shoes simply to take road dirt. When it's really cold and wet, wear rubber boots.

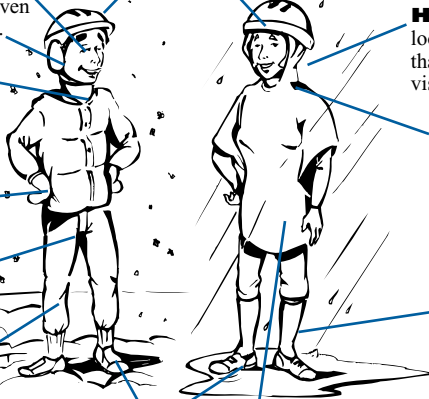
**Head:** Cover it unless you have thick hair. A tight-fitting hood or balaclava covers your ears and fits under your helmet.

**Hoods:** Don't use loose-fitting hoods that block peripheral vision.

**Neck:** High collar or hood keeps water from going down your neck.

**Leg gaiters:** often made of nylon; keep your pants legs dry.

**Rain gear:** Wear a waterproof jacket. If sweat's a problem, wear a **loose or vented jacket**, a **waterproof poncho** that lets in air from below, or a **cyclist's rain cape** that hooks to handlebars to keep it out of your tires.



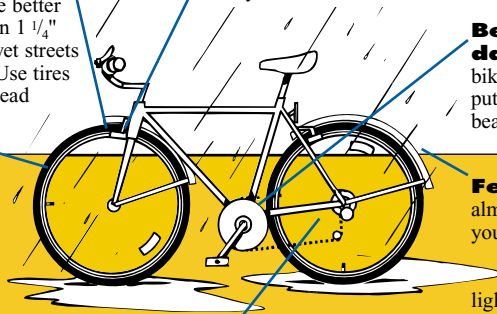
**Rims:** When wet, brake pads grip aluminum rims better than they do steel.

**Tires:** Fat tires have better traction. Tires less than 1 1/4" wide work better on wet streets when under-inflated. Use tires with a herring-bone tread pattern.

**Brakes:** Grime builds up on brake pads, making them squeak or scratch your rims. Run a rag between each pad and the rim, like shining a shoe. Occasionally remove the wheel and check pads for wear.

**Bearing damage:** After biking in wet weather put your bike indoors so bearings can dry.

**Fenders:** They beat almost anything to keep you dry on wet pavement. The newest plastic ones are cheap and light, but can crack if installed wrong.



**Salt damage:** With lots of winter riding, occasionally wipe down your frame, rims, spokes, and derailleurs, and lube your chain (see page 5). Use a toothbrush for hard-to-reach parts.

# BICYCLISTS' RESOURCES

## Information about Bicycling in Chicago

- ▶ **Chicagoland Department of Transportation**  
312/742-BIKE (742-2453)

Suite 400, 30 N. LaSalle St., 60602

[www.ChicagoBikes.org](http://www.ChicagoBikes.org)

View the *Chicago Bike Map* on-line, request bike parking, and request a copy of this booklet, the *Chicago Bike Map*, or other free publications.

- ▶ **Chicagoland Bicycle Federation**

312/42-PEDAL (427-3325)

Room 300, 650 S. Clark St., 60605

[www.biketraffic.org](http://www.biketraffic.org)

Your one-stop source of bicycle info for the Chicago area: maps, commuting, bike rides and cycling events, safety, clubs, government contacts, national bicyclists' network, and bike facilities planning.

## Other Helpful Sources

- ▶ **To report a city street hazard:** 311
- ▶ **To report a Lakefront Path hazard:** 312/744-2474
- ▶ **To request Mayor Daley's Bicycling Ambassadors:** 312/427-3325, x36  
[www.biketraffic.org/ambassador](http://www.biketraffic.org/ambassador)

## Maps

- ▶ **Chicago Bike Map (free)**  
Chicago Dept. of Transportation 312/742-2453  
Suite 400, 30 N. LaSalle St., 60602
- ▶ **Lakefront Trail Map**  
Chicago Park District 773/256-0949  
[www.chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com)
- ▶ **Seven-county Chicagoland Bicycle Map**  
(\$6.95 retail, \$5.00 Federation members)  
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation [www.biketraffic.org](http://www.biketraffic.org)  
312/42-PEDAL (427-3325)  
Room 300, 650 S. Clark St., 60605
- ▶ **North Branch Trail (Cook Cty. Forest Preserve)**  
Maps: 708/771-1330 Repairs: 708/403-7391
- ▶ **State-wide bike map information**  
Ill. Dept. of Transportation 217/782-0834
- ▶ **State-wide trail information**  
Ill. Dept. of Natural Resources 217/782-7498
- ▶ **Illinois Rules of the Road**  
Secretary of State's Office 800/252-8980
- ▶ **City of Chicago hotline for the hearing impaired**  
312/744-8599 (TTY only) or 311

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# CHICAGO TRAFFIC LAW: Bicycles treated as vehicles!

## Traffic rules that apply to motorists also apply to bicyclists.

*Every person riding a bicycle upon a roadway shall be granted all of the rights and shall be subject to all of the duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle by the laws of this state declaring rules of the road applicable to vehicles or by the traffic ordinances of this city applicable to the driver of a vehicle.*

Section 9-52-010(a)  
of the Chicago  
Municipal Code

Because both state and city laws give bicycle riders the rights of vehicle operators, motorists should treat them as such. Specifically, motorists should treat a bicycle as a vehicle for purposes of:

- ▶ LEFT AND RIGHT TURNS
- ▶ PASSING
- ▶ STOPPING AT LIGHTS  
AND STOP SIGNS
- ▶ YIELDING RIGHT-OF-WAY
- ▶ LANE POSITION



A message from the Chicago Department of Transportation.

*Bicyclists are encouraged to reproduce this message and share it with motorists and others.*