



## USA Cycling Course Safety Guidelines

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From: Shawn Farrell, Technical Director  
To: All 2010 Race Organizers  
Cc: All Staff and Race Officials

USA Cycling thanks you for accepting the challenge of organizing a bicycle race. Whether you are doing this out of love for the sport, or because you're a professional event organizer, or something in between, I'm sure that you share my number one concern about any cycling activity: **safety.**

USA Cycling is always concerned for the safety of anyone connected with a bicycle race. Aside from safety, though, you should be aware that injuries to a rider, a marshal, or a spectator can be costly from a legal standpoint. Although riders sign agreements not to sue you, the city or USA Cycling if they are injured, by the time these waivers come into play thousands of dollars may already have been spent in defense of the case.

Ultimately, our members bear these legal costs through their license fees. The only way to keep these costs down is to reduce the number of accidents, and that means we must offer only events that are safe. **While it may be a cliché to say, "safety is no accident," it is quite true.**

To better secure our courses, I would like to provide you with some safety recommendations from an independent risk analysis conducted on USA Cycling's behalf. I ask that race organizers carefully review their courses for safety from top to bottom using the points presented below as a guide.

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*The following are safety items we would like to emphasize; this is not intended to be an exhaustive checklist of course safety. Be sure that a **pre-event checklist** is completed in detail for every USA Cycling event, in consultation with your event's Chief Referee, your Local Association and your Regional coordinator (a complete **medical plan** is also encouraged).*

## **I Course Design**

The first step to organizing a safe course is to choose a good course. Although this course should be checked far in advance, it should also be checked both a week before and again the day before the event. Many races have suffered because of road construction that happened the day before the event. As many corrections to road defects as possible should be made, and this requires thorough, early and frequent checks.

- Imperfections in the road surface—such as potholes—should be indicated with paint.
- Time gaps should be put into the schedule to allow riders time to warm up on the course.
- Don't put an unsafe number of riders on the course. The maximum for a category 5 race is 50. The maximum number for any race including cat 5 riders is 75. For other races, the maximum is 100 unless a higher number was specified in the official race announcement. (See Racing Rule 1G6.)

## **II Informing the Public**

Races usually run far more smoothly when the public is informed and receptive to having the event. Some leading race organizers go out of their way to get local politicians involved. In one jurisdiction, the mayor even declared the day of the event to be "Official Bike Race Day." In any event, ensure that the public is fully informed before race day.

- Contact each family and business along the proposed course either personally, by telephone or with flyers.
- Make sure a timetable for the event is available so that everyone knows where and when the race will be held.
- Provide for emergencies. How will an ambulance get on the course if it's needed?

### **III Race Marshals**

For most events, the race's marshal crew is its backbone. They work long hours protecting the riders and the public. However, sometimes marshals are overlooked when it comes to event planning. The coordination of marshals is so important that **no race should run without someone specifically in charge of the marshals.** This marshal coordinator should have several important responsibilities:

- Make sure the marshals have the correct equipment, such as fluorescent red or yellow vests, flags and whistles.
- Make sure the marshals are trained in their jobs, which depends greatly on where they are stationed during the event.
- Make sure the marshals are deployed correctly, both for their location as well as for their abilities. Marshals should all be of legal age.
- Coordinate the movement and care of the marshals. Nobody can work 12 hours without food, water and toilet breaks.
- Marshals should sign waivers, just like the riders. (There is a standard volunteer waiver available on USA Cycling's web site.)

### **IV Drivers**

Many races use lead and follow vehicles. Avoid using last-minute volunteers for these key jobs. Your drivers hold the riders' lives in their hands and must be experienced both at driving a vehicle and driving a vehicle around cyclists.

- Check driver licenses and insurance on the drivers you intend to use.
- Train the drivers in their jobs. Discuss safe follow distances with them.
- Be especially careful with pace vehicles on tight circuits. Drivers should use their horns to warn spectators of their approach.
- Drivers should sign waivers, just like the riders and the race marshals.
- Report all automobiles and motorcycles that will be used during the race on a Non-owned/Hired Automobile/Motorcycle Application filed with your permit along with the appropriate fee to ensure that you are covered.