

Avoiding Bicycling Crashes in Arkansas

If you are a cyclist in Arkansas, you are a member of a rapidly growing crowd. More people have taken to cycling because it is a fun, economical, and environmentally friendly mode of transportation that will get you where you need to go. However, you should never assume that just because you are a bicyclist you will be noticed by drivers.

To decrease your chances of being in a crash, you need to ride like you aren't going to be noticed by any drivers. You need to take extra precautions, be proactive to make yourself more visible, and be aware of the rules of the road where you are riding. Safe riding means adhering to cycling laws and making sure you are familiar with the laws in the different communities where you will be riding. While there are [state bicycle laws](#) you should follow, different communities may have different ordinances you need to be aware of when you take to the roads.

Avoid Dangerous Situations

The first step to safe bicycling is to avoid dangerous situations, specifically situations where a motorist will be surprised and not expecting your movement. In Arkansas, a bicycle has to obey all of the same traffic rules and regulations as a car. While it is usually safest for cyclists to ride to the right, if you are overtaking and passing another vehicle that is traveling in the same direction under the rules governing movement, you can pass on the left. You should ride in a spot in the lane where you are visible. You want to stand out so you are much more likely to be noticed as you ride down the road.

Here are some other things to avoid to protect yourself from a possible crash:

- Don't attempt to pass cars that are turning left because you can be blocked out of view and end up being hit by a car.
- Don't continue through intersections without stopping! You can easily be hit by a vehicle.
- Don't assume any driver can see you, even if you've been ahead of traffic for miles. Always signal when you're making turns.

Stay Visible!

One major mistake bicyclists have the tendency to make is failing to make themselves visible by wearing brightly colored clothing and by ensuring their bicycle is decked out with the proper lighting and reflectors for night riding. If you wear white, black, blue, or brown, you are going to blend in with the landscaping, so you aren't going to be noticed as readily by drivers. If you put on some orange, red, hot pink, neon green, or yellow clothing, you are going to stand out in traffic. Although you're not legally obligated to do so in the state of Arkansas, you should also [wear a helmet](#) with reflectors to help keep yourself seen.

Arkansas law states that the front of your bike should have a white headlight that is visible by other vehicles for up to 500 feet. A rear taillight or reflector should also be visible from behind up to 500 feet. To make your bike visible from all sides, you should place reflectors on the spokes, pedals, and fenders. You can also benefit

by using reflective bands on your wrists and ankles and reflective tape across the different areas of your bike as well as your clothing.

Be Aware of Wildlife

Arkansas has a variety of wildlife you should watch out for when riding. Here are some of the more common critters you could encounter, and what to do if you see one:

Deer: Deer are very common in Arkansas. The best way to avoid a crash with a deer is to be sure you're riding slowly enough to stop if you see one! There is no need to be riding so quickly and with such low visibility that you're unable to stop for large game. Deer are most active at dawn and dusk, so take extra precaution during these times of the day. If you do see a deer cross in front of you, be sure to wait for more. Deer rarely travel alone, so odds are good that another will follow.

Dogs: As there are an estimated 4.5 million dog bites every year, this is the animal you're most likely to encounter on your bike. If you do see a dog coming for you, you have a few options.

- Cycle faster. Most dogs can't run faster than 20 mph.
- Scare it by yelling at it or squirting it with your water bottle. Many dogs will respond to loud, firm voices and back off.
- Protect yourself by putting the bicycle between you and the dog.
- Give it your bike to attack if all else fails!

Bears: Much like deer, you should always ride at a speed safe enough to stop if you come across a bear in the road. The only species of bear you'll find in Arkansas is the black bear, and they typically avoid humans at all costs. If you do see a black bear, you should hop off your bike, slowly back away, and start talking. Usually, once the bear recognizes you're a human, it'll leave. If the bear *does* approach you, be sure to position your bike between yourself and the bear. Continue to talk and back away from the bear until it recognizes you. Always remember to never run, and never "play dead" with black bears. If the bear approaches, shout, throw rocks or sticks, and stand as tall as possible. Again, black bears rarely attack humans.

Snakes: Arkansas has six poisonous snakes: the copperhead, cottonmouth, three types of rattlesnakes, and the Texas coral snake. If you encounter *any* snake on the road, your safest bet is to simply hop off your bike and wait. Eventually, the snake will slither off the road. To encourage faster movement, try throwing a stick or rocks behind the snake.

Safe Cycling in Arkansas

With common sense and knowledge of cycling laws, you can make your cycling in Arkansas much safer. Stay alert and be aware of the possibility that even the safest cyclists can end up being involved in a crash, but with some added precautions you can reduce those odds significantly.

*This article was not written by an attorney, and its content is not guaranteed. If you are involved in a crash with a motorist and need assistance, you should consider speaking with a personal injury attorney in Arkansas.

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