

FACT SHEET: Bicycle Helmet Safety

North Carolina Bicycle Crash Incidence and Prevalence

- In North Carolina, a bicyclist is killed or injured approximately every six hours.
- One out of every three bicyclists killed in NC is under age 16.
- Each year, an estimated 800 children are hospitalized in NC for bicycle-related injuries; an additional 13,300 receive emergency treatment

Bicycle Helmet Effectiveness

- Bicycle helmets prevent 60% of head injury deaths.
- Bicycle helmets reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85% and the risk of brain injury by as much as 88%.

North Carolina Bicycle Helmet Usage

- According to study by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center, fewer than 24% of all bicyclists in North Carolina currently wear a bicycle helmet when riding on the road.
- Helmet usage varies greatly by region of the state, by location and by age.
- Children between the ages of 6-18 are significantly less likely to wear a helmet than are adults or young children carried in a child seat on the back of a bicycle despite passage of the mandatory helmet use legislation.

Cost and Availability of Bicycle Helmets

- Good quality helmets that meet Consumer Product Safety Commission standards are available in retail outlets for between \$10-15.
- Many agencies and organizations including the DOT, the State Highway Patrol, NC Safe Kids Coalition and local health departments, law enforcement agencies and recreation departments can provide free helmets to needy children.
- Bulk helmet purchase programs sponsored by schools or other local agencies and organizations can make approved helmets available to children for as little as \$5.00 each.

Enforcement of Bicycle Helmet Laws

- Generally, a law enforcement officer gives a warning to a child not wearing a helmet for a first offense.
- If there is a second offense and a citation is written, the fee will be waived upon proof of purchase of a helmet.
- Frequently, a law enforcement agency has helmets to give to children whose parents cannot afford to buy them a helmet.
- Law enforcement officers can use the helmet law to undertake an incentive program, rewarding a child seen wearing a helmet with a coupon for fast food or a prize of some sort.
- Through these incentive programs, law enforcement officers have an opportunity to create positive interaction with children and can encourage helmet use.