

news & notes

TAKE CARE OF YOUR RIDE

According to the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, more than half a million employees bike to work each day in the United States. The ride is less costly than driving or taking public transportation. Daily peddling also helps keep cyclists in shape.

In recognition of May as **National Bike Month**, take some time to take care of your ride. Here's how:

Inspect your bike. Even more than with a car, it's vital to give your bike a quick once-over before you set out. Make sure that your:

- Tires are properly inflated.
- Brakes work.
- Chain is properly seated.
- Quick-releases are closed.

Get your bike tuned up

regularly. If you're not a skilled bike mechanic, keep your bike in good repair with an annual inspection at a bike shop.

For more information on cycling, check out the:

- League of American Bicyclists (www.bikeleague.org)
- Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute (www.bhsi.org)



If bicycling to work, warn your colleagues that you may show up in tight shorts.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

*WMMIC-Strength in Members
May 2015*

Bicycle commuter's safety checklist *Ride safely and healthfully*

May is **National Bike Month**, and many states and cities are promoting Bike to Work programs and events. Supporters of the bike-to-work movement point out that bikes enhance traffic conditions, environmental conditions, and personal health.

Biking is good for health and the environment, but bike riders can be at a disadvantage in traffic, so some caution is advised. If you bike to work, stay safe with this safety checklist:

Plan your route. You don't want to just get on your bike on Monday morning and take your usual driving route to work. Instead, work out a bike-friendly route beforehand.

Your bike route to work will probably be along side streets, bike lanes, and bike paths rather than heavily traveled "main drags." Practice your route on your day off, and make sure you work out any tricky spots along with your new commute time.

Take advantage of public transit. If you have too far to go to bike the whole route, you may be able to use public transit for part of your trip.

Ride in the road. Beginning bikers may think sidewalks are safer, but bicycles belong—and are actually safer—in the roadway, following normal traffic rules.

Stay visible. Wear light-colored clothing in dusk and darkness, and use flashing lights on the front and back of your bike to make yourself easier to see.

Communicate. Be aware of the traffic around you, and make sure it's aware of you. Use eye contact, hand signals, and a bike bell to let others know where you are and what you're about to do.

Take up space. If you're riding along a line of parked cars, you're vulnerable to "dooming"—colliding with a car door when someone who doesn't see you opens it. Give parked cars a wide berth, even if it means that cars driving in your lane cannot pass.

Stay in control. Riding fast puts you at greater risk of losing control. Always go slowly enough that you can stop, turn, or otherwise maneuver as needed.

Be watchful. Look out for potholes and other roadway hazards and obstructions, and give yourself enough reaction time to avoid them safely.

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TABLET TABULATIONS

Use of tablets is skyrocketing, with more than a billion people expected to use them in 2015. Are there risks associated with these handy digital devices? Yes, according to a recently published article in the journal *Ergonomics*.

Past research has identified a link between increased forward bending of the head and neck (flexion) and pain. The authors tested university students who use tablets 50 percent of their time. X-rays and joint measurements were taken to assess gravitational demand on the neck and ergonomics of the head-neck system.

Researchers found that using tablets increases mechanical demand on the neck muscles 3 to 5 times more than a neutral position (with head and neck unbent). Using a tablet flat on the lap also had this effect, as compared with using it propped up.

Whether the individual was reading or typing had little effect on the level of neck strain.



Tablet tips

Try these precautions to eliminate discomfort

According to California State Fund ergonomist Helen Chandler, the big issue when using a tablet is how the device is held. The nondominant hand must hold the device while the dominant hand touches the screen. Even though tablets are quite light, holding one in a fixed position for a long period of time without support can lead to discomfort.

Consider these tips for reducing risk:

- **Don't buy a larger screen than necessary.** Smaller, lighter models that are easier to hold may be all you need and can mean less risk.
- **Consider an adjustable stand** if you use the tablet for reading.
- **If you type a lot on the device, purchase an external keyboard;** wireless Bluetooth keyboards are compatible with many models.
- **When using a tablet in the field, use a case with a strap** in order to reduce the need to hold the tablet as you move about.
- **Make sure the brightness is properly adjusted.**
- **Purchase a stylus that features a larger grip.** This reduces the risk of tight, pinched fingers.
- **Take regular, quick breaks** to give the eyes, hands, and neck a rest.

Preventing mercury exposures

How to handle fluorescent bulbs safely

When handling fluorescent bulbs on carpets, put a drop cloth down to prevent contamination if a bulb breaks. Remove and replace the carpet if a bulb does break on it. If you break a bulb, open windows in the area and leave; let the air clear for 15 minutes to reduce mercury vapor levels before returning to clean up the broken bulb. The room should be ventilated for several hours. In addition:

- Keep coworkers out of the area until cleanup is complete.
- Put on rubber gloves to protect yourself from broken glass.
- Prepare a sealable container to hold all broken glass and cleanup materials and prevent further release of mercury vapors.
- Pick up large pieces of glass and put them in the container.
- Use two stiff pieces of paper, such as index cards, to collect smaller shards and dust.
- Use sticky tape, such as duct tape or packing tape, to pat the area and pick up fine particles.
- Use a damp paper towel to clean up the finest particles.
- Put all debris and cleanup materials into the container and label as "Universal Waste—broken lamp."
- Place the sealed container in an appropriate storage area for universal waste. It should be disposed of as universal waste.
- Wash your gloves, remove them, and wash your hands and face.
- Don't use a vacuum cleaner to clean up broken fluorescent bulbs. Vacuuming spreads mercury vapor and dust throughout the area and contaminates the vacuum.