



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION: RIDING YOUR BIKE WITH A VIDEO CAMERA IN PA.

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As more individuals add a bicycle to their lives as part of a commute or for recreational activities, the number of conflicts between people driving motor vehicles and people riding bikes continues to increase across the United States.

Nationally, the [Fatality Analysis Reporting System](#) (PDF) showed an increase in bicyclists killed from 729 in 2014 to 818 in 2015. [Pennsylvania's statistics](#) (PDF) have varied from 19 fatalities in 2014 to 16 fatalities in 2015 and 2016, with injuries ranging from 1,298 in 2014, down to 1,268 in 2015, and back up to 1,298 in 2016.

Along with fatalities and injury-causing crashes, close calls have likely increased as well. Many regular riders can easily recall instances when a car or truck passed within 1 foot of their handlebars when the law in Pennsylvania requires drivers to slow down and provide 4 feet of distance when passing a bicycle.

Because of these experiences and recent media coverage of several hit-and-run crashes, significantly more bicyclists are interested in adding a video camera to their bicycle to capture their ride and potentially provide additional information in support of a crash investigation. However, there

are a few things you should know before strapping a camera to your helmet or bicycle and taking off on your next ride.

First, know how to operate your camera(s) and extract the recorded footage. Different cameras may automatically save the last 10 or 20 minutes of footage while others may require manual action to save data. Also, match the storage capacity of your camera to the length of rides you generally undertake. A camera is of little use if it fails to capture the incident.

Secondly, under the Pennsylvania Wiretapping and Electronic Surveillance law, it is a crime to record a conversation unless all parties consent (a felony of the third degree; see [18 Pa.C.S.§5703](#)). But there is an exception to that rule, such that a conversation occurring in a public venue may be recorded without consent, if the party being recorded does not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the conversation. The rule and exception apply to both audio recordings and video recordings that include audio.

So, if you are involved in a crash, are threatened by a close pass or aggressive driving, the state or local law enforcement will certainly take the video of the incident into account, and it would be a valuable piece of evidence, as long as it was taken in accordance with the laws discussed above. Even if you don't have a recording, providing the registration plate, make/model of the vehicle, and description of the driver would be of use.

Finally, you should be aware that the camera will capture your actions on the road leading up to the crash and any interactions with the driver afterward. So regardless of the circumstances, obey the traffic laws when riding, keep calm, and avoid escalating the situation because you're on camera too.

For more information on bicycling safely in Pennsylvania, check out the [Ride a Bike](#) section of our website.