Cyclists encouraged to use care on the roads

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WESTWOOD — The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) encourages people to enjoy the nice weather and not overlook the importance of bicycle safety—for both children and adults.

"More than 50,000 bike-related head injuries and 630 deaths occur in the United States each year," said BIA-MA Manager of Prevention Programs BJ Williams. "Bicycle safety is important for people of all ages because accidents do not discriminate. If you plan on riding your bicycle this year, take proper safety precautions and make sure your children observe you and learn this good behavior."

Families will likely be pulling out bikes from garages and taking rides around neighborhoods and public paths as well as roadways. There is more to bicycle safety than just wearing a helmet to protect your brain in the event of an accident. In fact, preventing an accident should be a rider’s first priority.

On the road, bicyclists must ride as though they are operating a vehicle. Therefore, paying attention to traffic signals and laws is an important part to overall bicycle safety. Stick to the following bike safety tips to ensure a safe bike season.

· Wear a helmet and insist that children wear one on every single bike ride, no matter how short or how close to home the ride may be. Many accidents happen on driveways, sidewalks and bike paths—not just on streets.

· Make sure the helmet has passed safety inspections and that it fits properly.

· Never ride against traffic—State law and common sense require that bicyclists ride on the same side of the road as motorists.

· Follow lane markings—don’t turn left from the right lane or go straight in a turn lane.

· Use hand signals to tell motorists and pedestrians your next move, whether turning or continuing straight.

· Always make eye contact with other drivers. Assume that other drivers don’t see you until absolutely sure that they do. Eye contact is important in gaining drivers’ awareness.

· Look for parallel-slat sewer grates, road debris, construction zones, or other road hazards.

· If riding at night, wear a light on a helmet or put one on the bicycle, and wear reflective clothing.

· Keep the bicycle in good repair. Adjust it bike so it fits and keep it working properly. Check brakes and tires regularly. Routine maintenance is simple.

BIA-MA is a private, non-profit organization that provides support to brain injury survivors and their families, offers programs to prevent brain injuries and educates the public on the risks and impact of brain injury. The association advocates for legislation to prevent brain injuries, including seatbelt and helmet laws. BIA-MA offers safety fact cards on helmet use, booster seats, pedestrian safety and falls prevention, among others. For more information, visit www.biama.org.

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