

**Title 9
BICYCLE HELMETS**

UPDATED: March 14, 2022

Chapters:

9.10 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS REGARDING BICYCLE HELMETS

9.04 FINDINGS

Sections:

9.04.010 Findings.

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A. Bicycling is an important recreational activity and mode of transportation that provides valuable exercise and supports a sustainable transportation option to fight climate change and promote health.

B. Head and brain injuries are a major cause of disability and death associated with the operation of a bicycle on public roadways and bicycle paths; and every year over one thousand Americans die of bicycle related injuries. Approximately forty percent of those deaths are due to traumatic brain injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

C. Bicycle helmets are an important tool that have been shown to prevent head injuries suffered by bicycle riders during a crash or fall.

D. In 1993, the Board of Health passed a bicycle helmet requirement stating that any person riding a bicycle on a public road, bicycle path, right of way or publicly owned facility shall wear a protective helmet.

E. On June 18, 2020, the board passed Resolution 20-08, which declared racism a public health crisis and committed to assessing, revising and writing its policies with a racial justice and equity lens including the Board of Health Code.

F. On June 17, 2021, the board heard Briefing 21-B10, a panel discussion on bicycle helmet laws in King County and the disparate impacts of enforcement of the helmet regulations. Data presented demonstrated that citations were issued to Black, indigenous and people of color more frequently than to white cyclists, and that persons experiencing homelessness reported that the helmet requirement is a commonly cited reason for engagement with law enforcement.

G. The harm resulting from disparate enforcement of the helmet requirement included increased interactions with law enforcement for communities and financial burdens in the form of a civil fine and associated court fees.

H. The board determined that because of the inequitable enforcement of the helmet regulation, a punitive approach to addressing the need for helmet use for bicyclists was not appropriate and repealed the previous bicycle helmet regulation.

I. The board is committed to support and encourage efforts to provide education, access, and helmet promotion for all-age bicyclists and other micromobility riders. (R&R 21-01 § 1, 2022: R&R No 03-05 (part), 7-18-2003: R&R No. 84 § 1 (part), 12-4-92).