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# Bay Area Bike & Pedestrian Guide

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**SAN FRANCISCO RANKS** as one of the most walkable cities in the U.S. It's also a very bicycle-friendly city. Tens of thousands of bicyclists take an estimated 128,000 daily bicycle trips. Unfortunately, The City is also home to some of California's most dangerous intersections for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**EACH YEAR MORE** than 600 people are hit by cars in The City. In 2020, 30 people were killed in traffic collisions in San Francisco, including 12 pedestrians and two cyclists. The top three causes of fatal crashes were drivers speeding (30%), drivers failing to yield to pedestrians (13%), , and drivers running red lights (13%).

**THROUGH THIS GUIDE**, I hope to raise awareness of the urgent need for motorists to be mindful of bicyclists and pedestrians. I also want to provide information for bicyclists and pedestrians on their legal rights and responsibilities. We all benefit by looking out for each other and sharing the road.

## CHRISTOPHER B. DOLAN

FOUNDER & CHIEF  
LEGAL COUNSEL,  
DOLAN LAW FIRM PC.



# Top 10 California Bike Laws every Cyclist should know



Several important exceptions in the Vehicle Code allow you to "take the lane." These exceptions are: (1) overtaking and passing another bicyclist, (2) preparing to take a left turn, and (3) when "reasonably necessary to avoid conditions . . . that make it unsafe to continue to ride along the right-hand curb or edge," such as pedestrians walking in the roadway (CVC 21202).

Although there are many laws on cycling, the ones listed below are some of the most important. You can find these and other cycling laws in the California Vehicle Code (CVC) and on our website at [dolanlawfirm.com/bikelaws](http://dolanlawfirm.com/bikelaws).

### Bicyclists Must Follow the CVC

Generally, bicyclists have the same duties and responsibilities as vehicle drivers. Thus, stop at stop signs and red lights just like all other vehicles (CVC 21200).

### Ride with Traffic

Ride in the same direction as traffic. If traveling in the opposite direction of a one-way street, walk your bicycle on the sidewalk (CVC 21650).

### Ride on the Right Side of the Road

If you are riding as fast as traffic, you can ride in the traffic lane. In most cases, you will be moving slower than traffic and must ride as close as practicable to the right-side curb or the edge of the roadway.

### Use Bike Lanes

If you are riding on a roadway with a bike lane and moving slower than traffic, you must use the bike lane. You may exit the bike lane after determining it is safe to do so and have given the appropriate signal. Specific examples of when you can leave a bike lane listed in the Vehicle Code include; making a left turn, passing another bicyclist, avoiding a pedestrian or car in the bike lane, and approaching a place where a right turn is



authorized (CVC 21208). have:

### Stop at, Not in, the Crosswalk

Crosswalks are for pedestrians, not cars or bicycles (CVC 21455).

### Yield to Pedestrians

Pedestrians should always use marked crosswalks when crossing a roadway. But even if they do not, bicyclists must exercise due care for the safety of any pedestrian on a roadway (CVC 21954).

### Ride with Lights and Reflectors at Night

When riding at night, you or your bike must be equipped with a white light that is visible from a distance of 300 feet in front of the bike. The bike must also

- A red reflector or a solid or flashing red light with a built-in reflector on the rear that is visible from a distance of 500 feet,
- A white or yellow reflector on each pedal, shoe, or ankle visible from the front and rear of the bicycle from a distance of 200 feet, and
- A white or yellow reflector on each side forward of the center of the bicycle, and a white or red reflector on each side to the rear of the center of the bicycle, unless your bike has front and rear reflectorized tires (CVC 21201(d)).

### Under 18, Wear a Helmet

If you are under age 18, you must wear an approved helmet when riding. If you are 18 and older, a helmet is not required. Do not risk a life-threatening head injury in a bike crash: always wear a helmet (CVC 21212).

### One Ear Not Covered

Bicyclists are not allowed to wear earplugs in both ears or a headset covering both ears (CVC 27400).

### No Tall Bikes on Roadways

The bike must be of a size that the bicyclist can stop, support it in an upright position with at least one foot on the ground, and start in a safe manner (CVC 21201(c)).

## Leading causes of serious injuries

On average, two bicyclists are killed each year in San Francisco. The most common situations in which bicyclists are injured or killed by cars, trucks, and other motor vehicles are as follows:

- Drivers speeding or running red lights
- Drivers making an illegal left or U-turn, thus colliding with an oncoming bicyclist in the opposite lane.
- Drivers not providing bicyclists sufficient space when passing or entering bike lanes.
- Drivers or passengers opening a car door without looking to see a bicyclist approaching (called being "doored").
- Careless or inattentive driving (often due to using a handheld device while driving).
- Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

In some instances, non-driver factors can lead to a bicycle crash. These factors include roadway hazards, poorly marked construction sites, construction site debris, sand or gravel on roadways, and other dangerous road conditions.



# San Francisco Major Danger Zones

Every year in San Francisco, about 30 people lose their lives and, over 600 are seriously injured while traveling on city streets. More than 75% of severe and fatal traffic injuries occur on just 13% of The City's streets. In 2014, San Francisco adopted the goal of reducing serious and fatal injuries on its roads to zero within ten years.

According to data in the Vision Zero 2020 End of Year Traffic fatality Report of dated March 2021 in the years 2018-2021, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), identified the most dangerous streets in The City. Please take extra care and be aware of speeding motorists crossing intersections or biking on these streets.

## **SOUTH VAN NESS BETWEEN MARKET & MISSION**

The rate of injuries along South Van Ness Avenue from Market to Mission and 12th Streets was 118 per mile from 2005 to 2011, including 28 severe or fatal injuries per mile. Between 2005 and 2011, there were 92 vehicle collisions, including 6 with bicycles and 12 involving pedestrians. The enormous intersection at Mission, South Van Ness, and Otis Streets poses particular risks.

## **GOLDEN GATE AVENUE FROM VAN NESS TO MARKET & TAYLOR**

Along this half-mile stretch of roadway cutting through the Tenderloin District, 144 total injuries and 17 severe or fatal

injuries occurred between 2005 and 2011. In 2014, The City removed 170 parking spaces near crosswalks at many Tenderloin streets, including Golden Gate Avenue, to increase pedestrian visibility for motorists.

## **MARKET STREET FROM FOURTH & STOCKTON & ELLIS TO 10TH & POLK & FELL**

This nearly one-mile stretch of Market Street through the heart of San Francisco had 192 injuries per mile between 2005 and 2011. Although private vehicles are now restricted from turning onto Market, taxis, commercial vehicles, and city-owned vehicles are allowed to turn onto the corridor. In February 2016, a city-owned vehicle turned left on Market from Seventh Street and killed a pedestrian in the crosswalk.

## **SIXTH STREET FROM MARKET TO BRANNAN**

This .72-mile section of Sixth Street between Market and Brannan Streets had 242 injuries during the study period, making the South of Market corridor San Francisco's second most dangerous roadway for pedestrians.

## **CYRIL MAGNIN STREET FROM O'FARRELL TO MARKET**

Less than two-tenths of a mile long, Cyril Magnin Street is heavily used by motorists exiting the Tenderloin and Union Square. At the same time, large numbers of tourists and commuters

coming from the Powell Street BART/MUNI station cross Cyril Magnin Street's intersections. The street saw 313 injuries per mile from 2005 to 2011, making it the most dangerous roadway in San Francisco.

## **JONES STREET FROM SUTTER TO MARKET**

Cutting vertically through the Tenderloin from Lower Nob Hill to mid-Market, this half-mile stretch of Jones Street had 203 injuries per mile between 2005 and 2011.

## **TAYLOR STREET FROM SACRAMENTO TO MARKET/ GOLDEN GATE**

Taylor Street from Nob Hill to mid-Market saw the same injuries per mile as Jones Street.

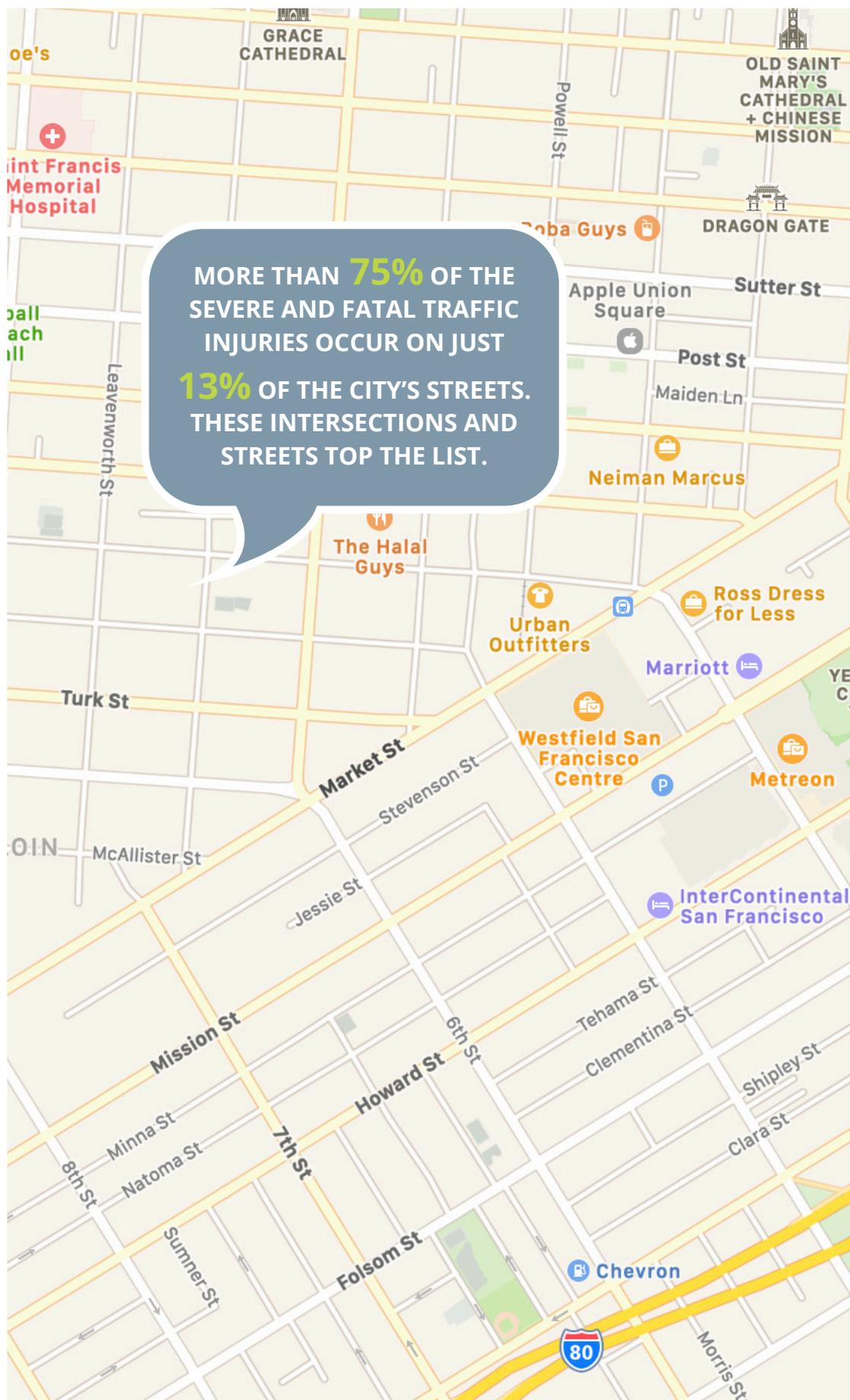
Based on recent data published by Waze, you should also take heightened caution at these intersections:

## **POTRERO AVENUE & 16TH STREET**

This Mission District intersection consists of five lanes of Potrero crossing four lanes of 16th Street. One pedestrian was killed here in 2013, and 10 pedestrians were hit by cars here in 2012 and 2013.

## **MARKET STREET, OCTAVIA BLVD., & HIGHWAY 101**

Octavia Boulevard turns into an on-ramp for 101 as it crosses Market. Between 2005 and 2012, 42 collisions of cars and bicycles occurred here, including 6 categorized as severe.



# Great Groups

These organizations promote bike and pedestrian safety. Check them out!

## 📍 SAN FRANCISCO BICYCLE COALITION

1720 Market Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 431-2453  
SFBike.org

## 📍 WALK SAN FRANCISCO

333 Hayes Street, No. 202  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 431-9255  
WalkSF.org

## 📍 BIKE EAST BAY

Bike East Bay  
466 Water Street  
Oakland, CA 94607 (510) 845-7433  
BikeEastBay.org

## 📍 MARIN COUNTY BICYCLE COALITION

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 695 Fairfax, CA 94978  
(415) 456-3469  
MarinBike.org

## 📍 CALIFORNIA BICYCLE COALITION

1017 L Street, No. 288  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 778-0746  
CalBike.org



# Sharing the Road with Bicyclist

By Christopher B. Dolan

**I WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO REMIND MOTORISTS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES TO BICYCLISTS AND OFFER TIPS ON HOW WE CAN ALL SAFELY SHARE THE ROAD.**



**Drive the Speed Limit:** Excessive speed and running red lights and stop signs are common in San Francisco and cause of most collisions between motorists and bicyclists (as well as pedestrians). Speeding increases your stopping distance and collision force. Even small increases in speed above the limit translate into large increases in the risk of death from a collision.

**Bike Lanes Are for Bicycles, Not Cars:** Many bike lanes are painted with a solid white line; some are green with a solid white boundary. The law restricts motor vehicles from driving in a bike lane except to park where permitted, to enter or leave the roadway, or to prepare for a turn within a distance of 200 feet of an intersection (CVC 21209).

**Mind the Green Box:** In San Francisco, you may encounter green boxes painted in the roadway — also known as bike boxes — at intersections. These are reserved for bikes to wait for the light to change. Cars may not occupy that space while waiting for a signal change and must allow bikes to proceed safely through the intersection.

**Pay Special Attention When Making a Right Turn:** Vehicle drivers approaching and making a right turn should do so as close as practicable to the right curb edge (CVC 22100). Be aware that a bicyclist may be to your right or immediately behind you and planning to go straight through the intersection. If there is not enough room for the bicyclist to ride on the right side of the road, the bicyclist is allowed in the traffic lane. We often see the tragic circumstances of a motorist cutting off or, worse, driving over a bicyclist who is following the law and riding on the right edge of the road when riding slower than the normal flow of traffic.

**When Passing, Give Bicyclists a Minimum of Three Feet:** Wait until it is safe to pass a bicyclist. When you do, you must provide a three-foot buffer between your vehicle and the bicyclist (CVC 21670). If this is not possible due to traffic or roadway conditions, the law requires that you slow to a reasonable and prudent speed when passing and pass only when doing so will not endanger the safety of the bicyclist.

**Use Your Signal:** Always use turn signals before turning, changing lanes, or pulling out from the curb. Without your signal, the bicyclist may not know to slow down until it is too late to avoid a collision.

**Watch for the Door Zone:** After parallel parking, check your rearview mirror, turn around, and look for any bicyclists in your blind spot before opening the door. Ask that any passengers exit from the right side of the car, or wait until you first check to make sure it is safe to open the doors.

*Christopher B. Dolan writes a weekly column on the law and your legal rights for the San Francisco Examiner and SF Weekly. Email Chris at [help@dolanlawfirm.com](mailto:help@dolanlawfirm.com) and ask him your legal question.*



# After the Crash



Here's a quick reference guide on what to do after an accident.

## ✓ GET OUT OF THE ROAD

If you can, move to the side of the road or ask for assistance.

## ✓ PRIORITIZE YOUR HEALTH

Call 9-1-1 for any injuries you have. If you cannot call 9-1-1, ask others to make the call for you.

## ✓ GET THE DRIVER'S INFO

Get the driver's name, address, phone number, date of birth, vehicle registration, license plate number, insurance company's name with the policy number, and any witnesses' contact information.

## ✓ TELL YOUR SIDE & GET THE POLICE REPORT

Tell your version of the accident. Write

down the police officer's name, badge number, and contact information. Ask for a copy of the police officer's incident report or a receipt with instructions on obtaining a report copy.

## ✓ NEED MEDICAL CARE?

If you suffered an injury—even minor—it's essential to seek medical treatment. Injuries may not manifest themselves until days after the collision. Report all pain, discomfort, stress, or anxiety you are suffering to your doctor. If you seek compensation, you will need medical documentation of your injuries.

## ✓ PRESERVE EVIDENCE

Preserve your bike in its damaged state and evidence of your ride, such as GPS tracking data. Write down events in detail, including any injuries you suffered and damage to your bike, helmet, and

clothing. Include photos!

## ✓ BE CAUTIOUS IN SPEAKING TO THE DRIVER'S INSURANCE AGENT

Do not speak with the driver's insurance agent or sign any documents. The agent will likely try to convince you to make statements that put you at fault for the accident or minimize the damages you suffered. Talk to an experienced injury attorney first.

## CONSULT AN ATTORNEY

If you suffered a concussion, fractures, or other serious injuries, **contact the Dolan Law Firm at 415-421-2800 or toll-free at 1-888-545-9519.** Only by talking to an attorney who represents your interests can you know the true value of your case and ensure that you receive the full compensation allowed under the law for the damages you suffered.



## Awards & Recognition



TOP 100 LAWYERS



## About Our Firm

One of California's premier plaintiffs' law firms, the Dolan Law Firm PC represents clients throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and across California from its offices in San Francisco, Oakland, and Marin. Possessing a "history of winning multimillion-dollar verdicts," as noted in the San Francisco Business Times, the Dolan Law Firm has recovered hundreds of millions of dollars for its clients in settlements and jury verdicts.

"At the Dolan Law Firm, we say, 'we are the best lawyers we hope you'll never need.' We take great pride in obtaining justice for our clients and holding the powerful accountable," says Christopher B. Dolan, who founded the firm in 1995 and has been recognized by U.S. News, Best Lawyers, Super Lawyers, and the Daily Journal as one of the very best injury and plaintiffs' attorneys in all of California.

The attorneys at the Dolan Law Firm work as a team under Christopher Dolan's supervision, drawing upon their considerable collective knowledge of the law and trial skills, as well as the firm's substantial financial resources and access to experts, to provide each client with superior legal representation.

The Dolan Law Firm represents individuals in personal injury cases and families of loved ones who have died due to the fault of others, including in bicycle and pedestrian accident cases. In addition, the firm represents employees challenging discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and wrongful termination.

The Dolan Law Firm is a long-time sponsor and supporter of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, Bike East Bay, and the Marin County Bicycle Coalition. These groups have recognized the Dolan Law Firm as local, bicycle-friendly attorneys. The firm also supports the California Bicycle Coalition, which advocates in Sacramento for the rights of cyclists and helps shape California bicycle laws.

*For a free, confidential, and no-obligation case evaluation, please visit the Dolan Law Firm online at [dolanlawfirm.com](http://dolanlawfirm.com) or call us at 415-421-2800.*

**THE BEST LAWYERS WE HOPE YOU'LL NEVER NEED**

WE HAVE RECOVERED MORE THAN HALF A BILLION DOLLARS FOR OUR CLIENTS INCLUDING:

**\$16 MILLION PEDESTRIAN COLLISION**

**\$5 MILLION SCOOTER CRASH ON DANGEROUS ROADWAYS**

**\$2.5 MILLION MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENTS**

**\$2.25 BICYCLE HEAD INJURY CASES**



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