

Motorists: Allow Three Feet for Bicycles... It's the Law

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In 2011, Nevada passed the Vulnerable User Law, which mandates that at least 3 feet of clearance is required between a bicycle and a motor vehicle. [Rules of the Road laws](#) concerning bicycles go further than that by requiring drivers on a multi-lane road who encounter a bicyclist going the same direction to safely move to the next lane of traffic to the left, if available, to allow clearance to the bicyclist. If changing lanes is not possible, the law requires when passing a bicycle, the motorist must allow at least 3 feet of clearance between any part of the vehicle and the bicycle, and not move to the right until safely clear of the bicycle. The law also requires motor vehicles not operate within a designated bike lane.

What is the Vulnerable User Law?

While Nevada law does not define what a vulnerable road user is, the term has been used in Europe by roadway planners and safety organizations to designate any user of the road who is not protected by an enclosed vehicle. This would include bicycle riders and pedestrians.

Nevada laws, however, does require additional penalties if a driver violates the three-foot rule, and then causes a collision with a bicycle rider. These penalties are higher if the collision occurs in a school zone. For a first-time violator, drivers can be charged with a misdemeanor, with fines up to \$275, and possible loss of driving privileges. Subsequent violations have higher penalties.

The Nevada DMV has published an [information sheet](#) that sets forth rules for motorists when encountering a bicycle rider. Additionally, many organizations have emerged as proponents of vulnerable users, specifically bicycle riders. One such national organization, the [League of American Bicyclists](#) ranks states by bike friendliness, and finds Nevada to rank 31 out of the 50 states in terms of safety for bicycle riders.

Local Resources for Safe Biking

Locally, the [Southern Nevada Bicycle Coalition](#) and the [Las Vegas Valley Bicycle Club](#) are active in lobbying efforts to increase bike safety in the state. The [Three Feet for Pete](#) organization, commemorates Pete Makowski's unfortunate death by sponsoring an annual Safety Ride each year.

Also, the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) publishes the [Bike Map](#) showing bicycle routes throughout the Las Vegas valley.