

Why Drivers Fail to “See” What is in Plain View

Most of us know the first thing a driver says after a collision with a cyclist is “I never saw her.” But, how can that be when the cyclist was lawfully riding in broad daylight?

“Human factors” experts study human interaction with objects and aspects of our environment including the limits of human attention. Each of us are bombarded with an enormous amount of visual images, sounds and smells as we go through our daily activities, including the driving an automobile. We become consciously aware of only a tiny fraction of these stimuli which capture our “attention.” Once something captures our attention we become consciously aware of its presence as we “focus” on it. However, for every image we allow into our conscious attention there are many, many others which we unconsciously disregard. This is a natural process common to all people and affects each of us every waking moment of our lives. Human factors experts call this process “inattention blindness.”

Our minds are not capable of focusing attention on every visual image, every smell or every sound surrounding us. Our eyes do not automatically translate every visual image to our conscious awareness. Rather, our brain automatically filters out the vast majority of the visual stimuli our eyes “see” thereby allowing the brain to focus only on what it determines to be relevant at

that moment. This explains why someone performing a simple task fails to “see” what is otherwise plainly visible and later is unable to explain why they “never saw it.” It also explains why two people having the same opportunity to “witness” an unfolding event often have divergent recollections of what they “saw.” This process is constantly going on and is beyond our conscious control.

The problem for us as cyclists is that “inattentional blindness” affects every driver of every vehicle we encounter on the road with every ride. Someone gets hurt when a driver’s inattentional blindness filters out information which was readily available but unconsciously overlooked or ignored. The more we become aware what affects a driver’s mental lapses the more we can avoid their consequences.

I hate to leave you hanging but I will have more information on this next month. It is too much to work into a single article. Be careful until then, please.

Source:

<https://www.visualexpert.com/Resources/inattentionalblindness.html?fbclid=IwAR3unLnnktdGRfp0Ymz8XxDvGvTU34Y3rnYb4CIsNmCUgFStmbjWmsb5Jjo>

Jim Dodson is a cyclist and an experienced injury & bicycle accident lawyer. Although his primary office is in Clearwater, he represents injury victims throughout Florida. He is a bicycle safety advocate and serves on the Board of the Florida Bicycle Association. He is also the author of the Florida Bicycle Accident Handbook. For answers to your cycling questions, please visit www.floridacyclinglawyer.com.

**Legal information is not legal advice. Nothing in this article may be considered legal advice. If you have specific questions for Jim Dodson, simply call his office at 1-888-340-0840. There is never a charge to talk about your case.*