

Reduce Your Odds of Being Hit by 50%

An amazing study has been published on the effects of wearing a bright fluorescent jacket while riding during the daylight. It was conducted in Denmark, a country with a dense population of cyclists and, incidentally, where cycling injury crashes are vastly under reported by the riders. In fact, the study suggests under reporting by cycling crash victims of 86% for those with serious injuries and over 90% by those with minor injuries. (There must be a dearth of bicycle injury lawyers in Denmark!) Denmark is in the EU which experienced 2000 cycling traffic deaths in 2010, about 7% of all traffic fatalities.

One purpose of the study was to provide a way to reduce the “I never saw” them response from motorists after colliding with a person riding a bicycle. In Denmark, 82% of multiparty cycling crashes occur during daylight. The theory behind the study was that increasing rider visibility would result in fewer crashes.

There were 6793 participants who were randomly divided into essentially equal numbers of people in a test group and a control group. To participate in the study they each agreed to ride their bike at least three times per week, although most participants rode their bikes daily and a high percentage used their bikes for transportation. Each member of the test group was required to wear a yellow florescent jacket each day they rode. The jackets were all

alike and were provided by the study. The control group wore their normal riding attire.

The study relied on web based self reporting each month about whether they had been involved in a crash involving another person or vehicle. In addition, the test group received random reminder emails following-up on their use of the jacket.

The test results showed an astonishing 47% reduction in overall personal injury crashes involving the test group wearing the high visibility yellow florescent jackets. Their effectiveness in preventing crashes with motor vehicles was even higher at a 55% reduction. The results were greater in the winter (they have more hours of reduced day time sunlight intensity than we have in Florida).

The results of this study were much higher than what I have seen in the past. They noted that the effectiveness of the florescent jacket was on the same level of magnitude in reducing crashes as using permanent running lights (41% reduction) citing another study (also an amazing number!).

What is our takeaway? Cyclists should be wearing bright florescent clothing during the day. This study used jackets, but Denmark is a much cooler climate. Each of us should be using fixed daytime running lights, front and rear (not a weak light no one can see!). While not addressed in this

study, visibility is significantly increased by wearing florescent colors on our knees/legs and at our ankles. Finally, remember to wear reflective clothing at night. Florescent colors are ineffective at night.

Source: Safety Science, “The effect of a yellow bicycle jacket on cycling accidents,” Harry Lahrmann et al, Volume 108, October 2018, Pages 209-217.

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