

Road Safety Factsheet

May 2021

Cyclists and Lorries

Cyclists share the roads with many different types of large vehicles, including skip lorries, dumper trucks, box vans, concrete mixer trucks, articulated HGVs and so on. Although cyclists have relatively few collisions with these types of vehicles, those that do occur are very often serious and, in far too many instances, fatal for the cyclist.

Nearly all of these crashes happen at or near junctions in built-up areas.

Facts and figures

In 2019*, 203 collisions between HGVs and cycles resulted in 12 cyclists being killed, 65 seriously injured and a further 127 injured.¹ Although only 1.2% of cyclist casualties occurred in collisions with HGVs in 2019, this resulted in 12% of cyclist deaths that year.

Table 1 - Pedal cycle casualties, two vehicle accidents: 2019¹

Cyclist collision with a:	No. of cyclists killed (%) ⁺	No. of cyclist casualties (%) ⁺
Car	48 (48%)	13,289 (79%)
Heavy Goods Vehicle	12 (12%)	204 (1%)
Van/Light Goods Vehicle	7 (7%)	1,257 (7%)
Bus/Coach	0 (0%)	245 (1%)
Pedal cycle	1 (1%)	136 (1%)
Pedestrian	0 (0%)	86 (1%)
Motorcycle	0 (0%)	304 (2%)
Other	6 (6%)	179 (1%)
Total*	74 (74%)	15,700 (93%)

* Does not include collisions involving a cyclist and more than one other vehicle.

⁺ Percentages rounded

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The vast majority of these collisions occur in built-up areas, even though 75% of HGV mileage is on non built-up roads. The problem is especially acute in inner London. Over a period of 3 years, HGVs were involved in over 70% of cyclist fatalities, despite HGVs only making up 4% of road miles in London².

The three main types of collision between pedal cyclists and HGVs, accounting for about three-quarters of the pedal cyclists killed in these crashes, are:

- HGV Turning Left across path of Cyclist
- HGV and Cyclist Turning Left
- HGV Overtaking Cyclist

In a collision between a lorry and a cyclist, it is invariably the cyclist who will be injured. Therefore, lorry drivers have a particular responsibility for taking extra care to avoid collisions with cyclists. However, cyclists also have a responsibility for avoiding these collisions, and to cycle safely and responsibly to minimise conflict with lorries.

Both cyclists and HGV drivers are responsible for their own and each other's safety. Many problems would be solved if both groups gave each other plenty of room on the road.

As they are not necessarily cyclists themselves, lorry drivers often do not understand how fast they appear to be going from the cyclists' level, or how the side wind from their vehicles can affect riders when they are overtaking them. Equally, cyclists (especially children and less experienced riders) may be unaware of the difficulties which lorry drivers may have in seeing cyclists, or the fact that when an HGV pulls out to the right, it may be doing so to make space before turning left.

This is when a large vehicle is turning left at a junction and there is a cyclist (who may also be turning left or going straight on) on the nearside of the vehicle. If the driver does not see the cyclist and turns left, there is a strong chance that the cyclist will be knocked under the wheels of the vehicle or crushed against guard railings. Given the size and mass of lorries, this is very likely to result in serious or fatal injuries to the rider.

Even a minor collision in these circumstances can cause major injuries.

Advice for cyclists

Avoid riding along the inside of a large vehicle, especially near a junction, even if there is a large gap between the vehicle and the kerb.

When turning left, a lorry will often pull out to the right first. This creates a wide gap on the left side between the vehicle and the kerb, which many cyclists think is safe to ride into. But in fact this is a very dangerous place to be.

As the lorry begins to turn, it will swing back to the left very close to the kerb. The gap between the kerb and the lorry will disappear in an instant.

If a lorry in front of you is waiting in a queue of stationary traffic (particularly at the approach to any junction), do not undertake it. Hang back behind the vehicle and let it move off first.

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If you have to stop or give way at a junction where there are no motor vehicles waiting, it may be best to wait at a point about one metre away from the kerb, to ensure that other vehicles arriving after you (especially lorries) pull up behind you, rather than alongside you (where they may forget that you are there and fail to see you when they pull off).

However, if you do not feel confident about doing this, and prefer to wait at the junction in a position next to the kerb, you should take particular care if a lorry then pulls up alongside you. If this happens, let it move off first, so you have time to see if it is going to turn. Watch out for any guard-railing on the pavement beside you, and make sure that you cannot get trapped if the lorry does in fact start to turn left across you.

Remember, the driver may not have seen you. Driving a large vehicle on busy and crowded roads is difficult, and even with all the vehicle's mirrors, the driver may not spot a cyclist who is on the nearside of their vehicle.

Do not assume the vehicle is going straight ahead just because it is not signalling left.

Advanced stop lines

Many junctions have Advanced Stop Lines for cyclists. These are very useful as they let you stop ahead of other vehicles so drivers can more easily see you.

However, even at junctions with an Advanced Stop Line, it may be better to hang back if there is a lorry, especially if you are in any doubt about whether the driver has seen you.

References

¹ Department for Transport (2020) 'RAS40004: Reported accidents, vehicle user and pedestrian casualties by severity and combination of vehicles involved, Great Britain, 2019'

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras40-reported-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties>

Date Accessed: 27/05/2021.

² Transport for London (2017) 'Direct Vision Standard for HGVs'

URL: <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/deliveries-in-london/delivering-safely/direct-vision-in-heavy-goods-vehicles>

Date Accessed: 10/05/2017.

***Due to changes in severity reporting across some police forces since 2016, newer statistics are not comparable to earlier years. Therefore, the DfT provides both adjusted and unadjusted casualty figures in their statistical data tables. RoSPA uses adjusted figures as the DfT states that they are recommended for “the analysis of trends over time”.**