Investigating Common Trends in New Zealand Cycling Fatalities
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Summary
Following the death of five cyclists in New Zealand during November 2010, the Chief Coroner announced a national inquest to try and identify any common trends or information that could prevent a re-occurrence of such tragedies. However there was concern that the Inquest scope was of limited value without reference to a much larger sample of crashes.

To help inform this Inquest, a larger investigation into NZ cycling fatalities back to 2006 was undertaken. The aim was to try to identify any consistent patterns in crash occurrences that were significantly over-represented.

All cycling fatalities in NZ since January 2006 were identified from crash records and media reports; 78 fatalities were identified through to July 2012. Review of the relevant Police and media reports identified common attributes. Potential initiatives that could have prevented each fatality were also considered.

Some notable trends were found. Older cyclists (>50 years) are very over-represented, despite their relatively low cycling involvement, and also more likely to be at fault. Fatalities involving heavy vehicles and/or state highways were also higher than expected. Poor observation by drivers was very common. The study also identified inconsistencies in crash information recorded, including recording of non-motor vehicle crashes and clothing/helmets worn.

The study has provided valuable information to inform both the Inquest and transport safety trends that are not evident from just examining cycle injury crashes.

Crash Data Studied
- All cycle fatalities involving a motor vehicle since Jan 2006
- All other cycle fatalities identified on a road or path since Jan 2006
- Mountain-bike fatalities on tracks were not included

Sources: NZTA/MOT Crash Analysis System (CAS), NZ Police Fatal Crash Reports, News media reports

Vehicle Involvement
*Does not include non-motor veh crashes

Speed Limits

Crash Location

Helmet Wearing

High-Visibility Clothing

Driver Observation and Hi-Vis Clothing

Most Common Crash Patterns Identified
- Motorist passing cyclist (possibly turning left) not providing sufficient clearance 27%
- Cyclist turning or moving over to the right failed to give way to passing motor vehicle 13%
- Motorist turning/crossing failed to give way to through cyclist with right of way 9%
- Cyclist lost control, went off the road 9%

What Might Have Helped Prevent these Fatalities?
- More Education/Training/Promotion to Improve Motorist Behaviour 49%
- Cycle Skills Training (incl. a focus on Older people cycling) 45%
- More/Better Cycling Facilities (Cycleways, Intersections/Crossings, etc) 18%+
- Truck Safety Equipment (Under-run protection, Blind-spot mirrors) 12%
- Lower Speed Limits/Environments (incl. School Zones) 10%+

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