

Expert advice

Q&A

YOUR TECHNICAL, LEGAL, AND HEALTH QUESTIONS ANSWERED. **THIS ISSUE:** ANGRY DRIVERS, INTERNAL CABLING, BROKEN LEG RECOVERY, AND MORE

MEET THE EXPERTS



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See bit.ly/cycle-tooclose for more

Legal

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

Q On a snowy day this winter, I was passing a long row of parked cars when a driver overtook me with inches to spare. I was alarmed and banged on the passenger door to alert him, as he was forcing me towards the parked cars. This infuriated him: he gave chase, then jumped out of his car, fists raised, shouting about 'damage to his property'. I phoned the police, who arrived promptly and cautioned him. One officer told him I was within my rights to bang on the car. I regret that I didn't have a camera to record all this. But what I want to know is:

1. Could the driver claim against me for any damage to his car (not that I could see any)?
2. If he did, would the third-party insurance I have with Cycling UK cover me against this?

Name and address supplied

A Whilst this sounds like an incredibly frightening experience, I am glad that it did not result in a more serious situation.

From what you have mentioned, the driver of the vehicle failed to give you adequate space when overtaking. This contravenes Rule 163 of the Highway Code, which suggests that when drivers overtake cyclists, they should give them as much room as they would when overtaking a car. The police recommend that drivers provide a clearance of at least 1.5m when overtaking a cyclist. Motorists could face a fine and points if they are caught overtaking cyclists or 'vulnerable road users' too closely, as this could be seen as careless driving.

The Government is also looking into a separate offence of so-called 'car dooring', when a motorist negligently opens their car

door in the path of an oncoming cyclist – with predictable results. Concerns about both these issues have been highlighted by Cycling UK in previous issues of Cycle, and are part of the charity's campaigning efforts on behalf of members.

If you did cause damage to the vehicle (which seems unlikely from your description), the driver could make a claim against you. This should be covered by your third-party insurance from Cycling UK. This policy covers you for any accidental damage or injury caused by you or your cycle anywhere in the world, except the USA and Canada. However, it must be noted that the insurance policy will not cover you if you are cycling in the course of your employment, e.g. as a courier. Further details can be found on the Cycling UK website.

If you feel that the incident may lead to a claim against you under Cycling UK's policy, make contact as soon as possible on the Accident Claims Line: 0844 736 8452.

Richard Gaffney



Replacement is often a faff

Technical
INFERNAL INTERNALS

Q I recently bought a bike with internal cabling. The gears stopped working properly while out riding. I wasn't able to replace the gunked-up, rusty cable at the roadside, and had no success getting a new cable through at home, where I normally do all of my own maintenance. I took it to the bike shop, where the staff are not fans of internal cables. They did eventually get it in but had a real struggle. Is it possible to convert the bike to external cabling? How?
Miriam Porter

A The short answer is yes. All you need on almost any Bowden cable-operated brake or rear gear mech is to run the housing in one length from the operating lever to the mechanism, rather than having a break along the way with bare inner wire visible. Life may be a bit harder with a front gear mech, since few, if any, made today have an integral outer casing stop. Ingenuity will be needed to provide a rigid stop for the housing. You'll also need to find some way to keep the cable neatly secured to the frame – zip ties or similar will do the job. It may be tricky to find a suitable length of housing; the bike shop will have reels of housing, which will make life easier.
Richard Hallett

Technical
GUARDING AGAINST MUD

Q I enjoy cycling along a local path but rain makes it muddy, and in winter my bike gets muddied most of the time. I asked at my local bike shop if they could provide a mudflap for my front mudguard, but they failed to find a supplier. Where can I get one?
Roland Graham

There's no shortage of retro-fit mudguard flaps on the market, including leather examples made by Brooks, Dia Compe and Gilles Berthoud, alongside those in more conventional (and lighter, once wet) moulded plastic and rubber such as the SKS Spoiler. There are even custom-made flaps, which may be obtained online from outlets including **topflaps.co.uk** and **rawmudflap.uk**. If you or your LBS fancy making one, I recommend builder's DPC (damp proof course) plastic strip.
Richard Hallett



Brooks leather mudflap, £17

fracture of the tibia and/or fibula, treatment and recovery will depend on the type and position of the break(s) and whether there is any displacement of the bones. Simple, undisplaced fractures may be treated using a cast or brace, whereas other more complex ones may need internal fixation with metalwork to reattach and stabilise the bones. A fracture of the tibial shaft may take up to six months to heal.

It is very important to follow the advice of your consultant, who can advise you based on the specific nature of your fracture. In addition, you should see a physiotherapist who will also be able to help you plan your return to cycling. The time taken to get back to full weight-bearing is variable, but if you try to do too much too soon, you risk causing further setbacks and may delay the fracture healing.

Remember that when you first start to exercise again after an injury like this, the muscles will have become deconditioned and the leg is likely to feel very weak. So when you are ready to start back on the bike, you should try gentle low-resistance cycling initially. A stationary bike can be helpful here. Over the weeks and months you will gradually be able to build up back towards the level of cycling you were previously accustomed to.

Matt Brooks

Health
BROKEN LEG RECOVERY

Q Last November, I fell and broke my tibia and fibula. I now have a plate and bolts connecting them. After two months, I cannot yet stand fully. Do you have any advice on getting back to cycling after an injury like this? The consultant who did the operation said it would be four to five months. Can you advise?
Julie Hikins

The tibia (shin bone) and fibula are the bones which make up the lower leg. Extending from the knee to the ankle joint, the tibia is the larger of the two. Following



Metalwork for serious fractures

Left: Puvadol Jaturawuthichai / Alamy

Technical
GIVE ME A BRAKE!

Q I have recently had an e-bike conversion of my 1983 Longstaff. The new brake levers are of the three-finger type. Performance before the conversion was adequate. Now, when I'm coasting downhill, I cannot exert enough hand pressure to stop, presumably because of the increased weight. The cantilever brake arms are of the old-style, horizontal, wide-profile type. Even when fully adjusted, a 90° angle cannot be formed between the arm and the straddle cable. I have cleaned the rims, fitted new Aztec blocks, and lubricated the inner cables, all to no avail. I have tried to fit V-brakes but found them incompatible. Would a modern cantilever design with angled arms such as the Tektro Oryx prove more effective? I would value any advice.
Graham Colclough

A Old-school, wide-arm cantilever brakes tend to offer less mechanical advantage than the newer low-profile style, so swapping to one of the latter such as the Oryx may improve matters. That said, wide-arm cantis can be made to work well. You don't state what 'fully-adjusted' means; there may be a couple of tweaks worth trying. Firstly, making the straddle wire as long as possible (noting the maximum height the stirrup can be placed without

25mm really is comfier than 23mm



hitting the hanger when the brake is applied, plus around 10mm to allow for block wear) will increase the arm-to-straddle wire angle. Secondly, given the age of the machine, you may be using a puny, bent-steel front hanger clamped by a threaded headset. These flex and waste hand power; replacement (if space permits) with a stiffer, forged aluminium hanger will usefully improve brake feel. If you get no luck, it may also be worth trying a Tektro Power Hanger in place of the straddle wire. These devices work well with low-profile cantilevers.
Richard Hallett

Technical
GOING 2MM WIDER

Q Is there honestly much difference between 25mm and 23mm tyres? I've been using 23s for years in all weathers, even on tracks and canal banks, with no problems. On these tracks, you can manage as long as you don't sit on the bike like a sack of spuds. Does 2mm make that much difference? I'm bemused by all the debate I keep coming across.
Leeflatz, via the Cycling UK forum

A That 2mm extra width works out as 15% greater air volume inside the tyre. This means 25mm rubber gives a noticeably more comfortable ride on most surfaces than the 23mm equivalent at the same pressure.
Richard Hallett

Technical
650x32B TOURING TYRES?

Q I'm having my dream touring bike built and decided to go for 650B wheels, as: 1) this is for an S&S coupled bike, so it'll be slightly easier to fit in the case; and 2) it seems like 26" will be slowly dying, while 650B will be slowly taking its place. I've been looking around and 32x650B is almost nonexistent. All I've found have been these two: 35-584 Schwalbe Kojak and 32-584 Continental Contact Speed. Those might do okay, but they're not as tough as the touring tyres I'm used to.
Tbessie, via the CyclingUK forum

A 650x32B is an interesting tyre size; roughly the same as the old British 26x1 1/4" touring standard, the tyre is narrow enough to be lightweight while offering a fast, comfortable ride. The rubber available in this format tends to be high-performance. For example, the Grand Bois Cyprès weighs just 260g. Hutchinson's Confrérie des 650 (available online) is a little heavier and impressively tough. Another 100g heavier, the Continental Contact Speed should make a durable touring tyre, but none of these is comparable to, say, Schwalbe's Marathon range. The good news for anyone with 26" wheels is that this size is going to be around for a long time yet.
Richard Hallett

Low-profile cantilever braking can be improved with a Power Hanger - available from sjscycles.co.uk



The Grand Bois Cyprès comes in 650x32B and it rolls very well

Contact the experts

Email your technical, health, legal or policy questions to editor@cyclinguk.org or write to **Cycle Q&A, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ**. We regret that Cycle magazine cannot answer unpublished queries. But don't forget that Cycling UK operates a free-to-members advice line for personal injury claims, tel: **0844 736 8452**.