



Q&A

Your technical, health and legal queries answered by Cycle's experts



Q I'm about to invest in some new commuting lights. I'd like to use ones that are 'marked as confirming to BS6102/3 or an equivalent EC standard', as that's what the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations require. But I can't find any lights that are marked as BS6102/3. German-approved battery lights exist but are not particularly common in the UK. My question is: does it matter? Is it actually likely to lead to a counter-claim of contributory negligence in the event of a car-cyclist collision?

Name and address supplied

Technically it does matter because cycle lighting standards are set in line with the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations. But I have never come across a case where a

point as detailed as the one you describe has been taken.

In compensation claims, I have often seen arguments of contributory negligence (partial fault) against the cyclist. These have included failure to have or display lights on the bike or for failure to wear a helmet or high-visibility clothing. I have not come across arguments, in my personal practice, as detailed as, for example, lack of pedal reflectors or lights not complying with the correct British Standard.

There are two issues here: criminal law and civil law. To be successfully prosecuted, there is a need for the prosecution to prove guilt 'beyond reasonable doubt', and the police can issue a fine. In civil cases the burden of proof is 'on the balance of probabilities'. If liability against the cyclist is proved, it might give rise to a reduction in compensation. However, we always look at all the circumstances. Were streetlights lit? Did the vehicle have its headlights on? Were there any reflective strips on the cyclist's luggage? And so on.

Nadia Kerr

Q I have a Giant Defy with Shimano 105 and a 50-34 chainset. After changing the worn inner for a Stronglight 34, the chain lands on top of the inner ring's teeth when shifting from the 50 to the 34.

Nicholas Tobin

If the chain rides on the tips of the inner ring teeth rather than dropping into them, you may have fitted a chainring made for a transmission with fewer 'speeds' than that fitted to your bike – for example, a 10-speed chainring with 11-speed transmission. The tooth centreline is offset from the main plate of the chainring by an amount suitable for the gearing. The difference is small and easily missed but enough to prevent clean shifting. Similarly, there may be enough of a difference between Shimano and Stronglight chainrings for the same gear count to cause the problem.

Richard Hallett

Q A rattling noise has started coming from my bike's drivetrain when freewheeling on rough roads. Chain length is fine. Could it be worn jockey wheels?

Colin Ward

Your noise may be caused by worn jockey wheels, although the tension maintained in the chain by the rear mech should prevent them from rattling unless their bearings are close to collapse. If the noise disappears when pedalling, it may be due to low derailleur spring tension. Otherwise, the source of your rattle is likely to be a component that has loosened. It might be anything from a chainring bolt to a bottle cage or mudguard stay.

Richard Hallett