

# Ottawa Bicycle Club 2017 Risk Management Plan for Member Activities

The Ottawa Bicycle Club (OBC) was founded in 1882 and has been operating continuously since at least 1970; since 1990, the club has consistently had approximately 1,200 members. It is a non-profit corporation operated by a board of directors and its volunteer members organize a wide variety of activities, from cyclocross and road races, weekly time trials and day tours, to week-long tours in Canada and the US, as well as the annual Rideau Lakes Cycle Tour, with over 2,000 riders. In that time, the club has suffered few serious accidents and one fatality.

This document describes how the OBC manages the activities it offers to members in order to minimize the risks to both participants and bystanders.

The OBC builds its risk management plan on three cornerstones:

1. sound policies and guidelines for safe cycling
2. education to ensure its members have the skill and knowledge to ride their bicycles safely
3. enforcement procedures that ensure club members comply with safety policies

The organizers in charge and the OBC board of directors review these programs annually and update them as needed.

For a more detailed description of the policies and procedures described below, please refer to the accompanying document, "Education in the Ottawa Bicycle Club", which is a snapshot of the information published on the OBC website and is kept up to date on an ongoing basis by the OBC directors with the support of the club webmaster.

## 1. Policies

OBC policies describe a set of best practices and required behaviours that apply to the club's various activities and ensure that members conduct themselves in the safest manner possible.

All club policies are documented on the club website in the education section. These policies are reviewed and updated annually and members are reminded frequently to be aware of them and to comply with them.

The list of policies covered in detail on the OBC website applies to all members and guests while taking part in club cycling activities and includes:

- Requirement to obey the traffic laws of the jurisdiction in which the club activity takes place
- Requirement for all riders, regardless of age, to wear an approved helmet
- Requirement for all competitors in a time trial to wear an approved helmet
- Requirement that bicycles be in excellent working condition
- Recommendation to stay with the pack on group rides
- Responsibilities of group members to the leader and to other members of the group
- Recommended speed range for each level of group
- Obligations of new and/or inexperienced riders
- Protocol for meal breaks
- Group riding terminology
- Description and protocol for group manoeuvres
- Safe riding practices
- Recommendations on courtesy and co-operation with other road users
- Recommendation and explanation for how to safely ride two abreast
- Decision matrix for deciding when to ride two abreast and when to ride single file
- Railway crossing guidelines

## 2. Education & Safety

OBC education programs ensure that members

- possess a high level of skill in riding their bicycle,
- know the laws applying to the operation of their bicycle,

- understand the risks of riding their bicycle, and
- have the training to encounter those risks without incident.

Education is an ongoing process: new members must acquire any skills they may be lacking and returning members must maintain the skills they have developed. All members are encouraged to improve their skills and are offered opportunities to do so.

In addition, all members must know and understand the behaviour they are expected to display, not only at OBC events, but whenever they are riding on public roads. They must know the law as it applies to bicycles and highway traffic and they must know the protocols of riding in a group in a wide variety of situations.

The OBC achieves these objectives through the following programs:

- On-bike training
- Website
- Newsletter
- Maps
- OBC Forum
- Seminars

## **On-bike training**

The OBC organizes three distinct on-bike training programs every year: frequent Introduction to Group Riding Clinics, an Advanced Skills Clinic, and a season-long Youth Program. All of these programs place a great deal of importance on teaching the cyclist

- to be aware of their position in relation to other cyclists and vehicles,
- to understand how the positions of the bikes and vehicles change over time, and
- how to avoid moving into danger.

### **- Introduction to Group Riding Clinic**

Members who have little or no experience riding in an organized pack must attend one of the Introduction to Group Riding Clinics before they can participate in club rides. The clinics, held on selected Saturday and Sunday mornings from April to June, are led by experienced instructors who teach participants group riding techniques. These techniques help develop the knowledge and skill needed to ride with a group and in traffic.

### **- Advanced Skills Clinic**

The Advanced Skills Clinic is an eight-week clinic aimed at experienced riders who want to further improve the skills they need to ride safely in a group. The clinic is offered once a year during the months of May and June. This clinic is supported by volunteer coaches, many of whom have or have had successful racing careers, and most of whom have many years of experience teaching these skills. The curriculum has been adapted and updated over a period of 25 years from Cycling Canada's "Learn to Race" manual. Although this is not promoted as a "learn to race" course, the OBC asks all its junior racers to take this clinic.

### **- Youth Program**

The OBC Youth Program for children aged 5 to 16 offers learning events to support road cycling, mountain biking, and cyclo-cross. Riders are encouraged to try each of the three cycling disciplines in order to develop an appreciation for the differences and to improve overall bike handling skills.

Athletes are divided into groups based on age and ability. Emphasis is placed on skills development and learning to be aware. The program is suitable for a wide range of cycling abilities and interests, from casual riding to racing.

The program adheres to the National Coaching Certification Program Long Term Athlete Development principles and Cycling Canada Coaching Guidelines.

The program focuses on cycling safety in order to protect these children and to develop responsible members of the cycling community.

## **Website**

The club maintains an extensive website with detailed documentation of all club policies and procedures as well as a current schedule with details of all club rides and activities. The site is organized so that all information can be found easily; any important changes are posted in the club newsletter. The OBC website can be found at <http://www.ottawabicycleclub.ca/>

## **Newsletter**

The OBC publishes its monthly newsletter, the “Spokesperson”, on its website and by email. In addition to information about club activities, the newsletter reports on changes in law and club policies, the latest road conditions, and tips on safe cycling.

## **Maps**

The club map committee coordinates continual evaluation of the best and safest roads available for club rides. This work is carried out by club members who report changes to road conditions as they are discovered.

Remote locations are scouted using the Internet, recommendations from cyclists and residents of the area, and recently, Google Street View to ensure that routes are as safe as possible.

Information of a temporary nature will be sent out on the club news forum or newsletter, but the website maintains a map library of recommended routes, which are made available both to members and to the general public.

Tour leaders provide these maps before a ride.

## **OBC Forum**

The club maintains an active discussion forum where members and non-members can exchange information and opinions about cycling topics. When relevant, the information exchanged here helps bring about new policies and procedures.

## **Seminars**

Through its social program, the club offers monthly presentations. These periodically include sessions on bike maintenance and repair, traffic safety, cycling law, and route selection for safe touring.

## **3. Procedures**

Finally, OBC risk management procedures are the actions that organizers and other volunteers at all club activities perform to ensure that club activities take place safely. These actions may take place before, during, or after the activity. They are designed to ensure that members know and comply with OBC policies and with the laws in effect, wherever the jurisdiction of the activity.

## **Membership**

Registration for membership in the OBC is now handled exclusively by the online system operated by CCN Bikes. This system ensures that all OBC members have agreed to a legally binding waiver and are also members of the Ontario Cycling Association with its insurance coverage. The OBC issues annual membership cards, which must be produced on demand as confirmation of membership.

Members under the age of 18 must present a waiver signed by their parent before their membership takes effect.

The club maintains a database of current and past members. Members who refuse to comply with club policies can be expelled and readmitted only upon agreeing to follow club policies.

Guests are welcome by invitation only and must prove membership in an Ontario-affiliated club.

## **Group Riding Clinics**

Group riding clinic instructors must be trained to conduct the course and must follow the detailed clinic curriculum as posted on the OBC website.

## **Tour Leader Guidelines**

Tour leaders must be group riders with several years of experience and must follow the tour leader guidelines as outlined on the OBC website, including:

- Identification of members
- Familiarity with OBC group riding techniques
- Familiarity with the route and route maps
- Knowledge of the Highway Traffic Act as it applies to cyclists
- Knowledge of OBC guidelines on dealing with motorists and police

## **Time Trial Guidelines**

Coordinators of the OBC weekly time trials are responsible for ensuring that the events are conducted without incident. They accomplish this by following these guidelines:

- Time trials take place on a parkway with no intersections, excellent pavement, and wide paved shoulders
- Time trials take place at a time when traffic is at a minimum
- Complete safety rules are read to all participants before every time trial
- Riders must wear approved helmets
- Volunteers remind riders to keep well clear of the roadway before and after their race
- Volunteers watch the turn-around and may help riders judge any danger that might be present
- Riders are forbidden from riding on the course before and after their race
- Riders are seeded by ability for their start times and set off individually at 30-second intervals to minimize the number of riders overtaking other riders during the event

## **Requirements and Guidelines for Filing Incident Reports**

Whenever an accident or other notable incident occurs, activity leaders must fill out the Ontario Cycling Association Sport Injury Form, obtain all required signatures, and deliver the form to the OBC office.

## **4. Risk Management for other OBC Events**

In addition to its regular club activities, the OBC organizes events that are open to the general cycling public and therefore not subject to the same risk management procedures that apply to member-only club activities. They include the annual Rideau Lakes Cycle Tour, the Eastern Ontario Cyclo-Cross Series, and the Paris-Roubaix cyclosporitif. These events are run under sanctions provided by the Ontario Cycling Association, with separate insurance coverage and their own specific risk management plans.