

To improve bicycle safety, crash reports need to capture more data

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Credit: Peter Griffin/Public Domain

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health researchers are calling upon police in all states to improve their reporting of crashes involving vehicles and bicycles, according to a new study being published Thursday, April 2, 2015. Currently, details on crashes are handwritten by police on paper and there are few bicycle-relevant codes.

The researchers are calling for [police](#) to use electronic tablets that would include more options to gather bicycle-specific data, such as drawings of the scene and additional codes that could indicate, for example, if the bicyclist was riding inside a painted bike lane and ran into a driver's open car door. This detailed information about each vehicle/bicycle [crash](#) could be automatically uploaded into spreadsheets for later analysis. Analysis, especially when combined with big data, could then guide the building of safer bicycle environments, encouraging more people to cycle, the authors said.

The study will be published online April 2, 2015 in *Injury Prevention*.

"Self-driving cars have been invented and apps tell cyclists of approaching vehicles but the vehicle/bicycle crash details are still hand written and drawn on the police crash report template, making crash analysis labor-intensive. To equal other technological advancements and improve the safety of bicyclists, multiple bicycle-crash-scene codes should be created for immediate data entry," said co-author Anne Lusk, research scientist in the Department of Nutrition at Harvard Chan.

The researcher's proposal addresses the increase in the number of bicyclists on the road in the U.S. The number of commuters who bike to and from work has risen about 62% from 2000 to 2013. Studies have indicated that if safety of the bicycle environment improved, more individuals would be willing to bike.

More information: "Database improvements for motor vehicle/bicycle crash analysis," Anne C Lusk, Morteza Asgarzadeh, Maryam S Farvid, *Injury Prevention*, online April 2, 2015. [DOI: 10.1136/injuryprev-2014-041317](https://doi.org/10.1136/injuryprev-2014-041317)

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