



KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Signature Report

R&R BOH21-01

Proposed No. BOH21-01.2

Sponsors

1 A RULE AND REGULATION relating to the enforcement
2 of King County bicycle helmet regulations requiring helmet
3 use by all age cyclists; amending R&R 84, Section 1 (part),
4 as amended, and BOH 9.04.010 and repealing R&R 84,
5 Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.01.010, R&R 84,
6 Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.01.020, R&R 03-
7 05, Section 1 (part), and BOH 9.01.030, R&R 84, Section 1
8 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.01.100, R&R 84, Section 1
9 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.07.005, R&R 84, Section 1
10 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.07.010, R&R 84, Section 1
11 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.07.020, R&R 84, Section 1
12 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.10.010, R&R 84, Section 1
13 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.15.010 and R&R 84,
14 Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.16.010.

15 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE KING COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH:

16 SECTION 1. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.04.010 are
17 hereby amended to read as follows:

18 A. ~~((Head injuries are a major cause of death and disability associated with the
19 operation of a bicycle on public roadways and bike paths. Every year approximately one
20 thousand (1,000) Americans die of bicycle-related injuries. Approximately seventy-five~~

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21 percent (75%) of those deaths are due to head injuries. A significant number of those
22 individuals who survive head injuries don't return to a normal life. They are often left
23 with profound, disabling and long-lasting conditions. From 1989 through 1998, there
24 were thirty five (35) bicycle-related deaths and 2,003 bicycle-related hospitalizations in
25 King County, including Seattle.

26 B. Bicycle helmets have been shown to prevent head injuries suffered by bicycle
27 riders during a crash or fall. Studies completed in 1989 and 1996 by investigators at
28 Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound and the Harborview Injury Prevention and
29 Research Center show that helmet use could reduce the number of head injuries involving
30 bicycling by sixty nine percent (69%) to eighty five percent (85%). The Medical
31 Examiner noted that of the eight bicycle-related deaths in 2000, four were not wearing
32 helmets. Moreover, the King County Child Death Review (CDR) found that of the five
33 children who died while riding a bicycle from July 1998 through April 2002, four were
34 unhelmeted; the CDR experts concluded that three of the children would have likely
35 survived if a helmet had been worn. Finally, using tools developed by The Centers for
36 Disease Control and Prevention it is estimated that nearly \$ 10 million would be saved
37 annually in both direct and indirect costs for bicycle-related head injuries if every cyclist
38 were wearing a helmet in King County.

39 C. Educational and promotional efforts in King County have increased helmet
40 use from two percent (2%) in 1985 to 61 percent (61%) in 1999 for children ages 5-12. In
41 1999, bicycle helmet use in adults was observed to be seventy one percent (71%).
42 However, these effects have plateaued. Additional efforts are needed to augment helmet
43 use.

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44 ~~D. Studies in the United States and elsewhere demonstrate that legislation is~~
45 ~~effective in increasing helmet use. Helmet laws in Georgia, Maryland, and New York~~
46 ~~increased helmet use by 26% to 40%. In North Carolina, helmet use increased 2-3 fold~~
47 ~~after legislation. Furthermore, New Zealand found a thirty percent (30%) reduction in~~
48 ~~head injuries after passage of a helmet law. Thus, regulations requiring the use of bicycle~~
49 ~~helmets enhance the effectiveness of educational efforts to reduce the number and~~
50 ~~severity of head injuries resulting from bicycle crashes. The board of health therefore~~
51 ~~finds that bicycle helmets are required for the safe operation of bicycles not powered by~~
52 ~~motor on public roadways, bicycle paths or any right-of-way or publicly owned facility~~
53 ~~located in King County, including Seattle.)) Bicycling is an important recreational~~
54 ~~activity and mode of transportation that provides valuable exercise and supports a~~
55 ~~sustainable transportation option to fight climate change and promote health.~~

56 B. Head and brain injuries are a major cause of disability and death associated
57 with the operation of a bicycle on public roadways and bicycle paths; and every year over
58 one thousand Americans die of bicycle related injuries. Approximately forty percent of
59 those deaths are due to traumatic brain injuries, according to the Centers for Disease
60 Control and Prevention.

61 C. Bicycle helmets are an important tool that have been shown to prevent head
62 injuries suffered by bicycle riders during a crash or fall.

63 D. In 1993, the Board of Health passed a bicycle helmet requirement stating that
64 any person riding a bicycle on a public road, bicycle path, right of way or publicly owned
65 facility shall wear a protective helmet.

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66 E. On June 18, 2020, the board passed Resolution 20-08, which declared racism a
67 public health crisis and committed to assessing, revising and writing its policies with a
68 racial justice and equity lens including the Board of Health Code.

69 F. On June 17, 2021, the board heard Briefing 21-B10, a panel discussion on
70 bicycle helmet laws in King County and the disparate impacts of enforcement of the
71 helmet regulations. Data presented demonstrated that citations were issued to Black,
72 indigenous and people of color more frequently than to white cyclists, and that persons
73 experiencing homelessness reported that the helmet requirement is a commonly cited
74 reason for engagement with law enforcement.

75 G. The harm resulting from disparate enforcement of the helmet requirement
76 included increased interactions with law enforcement for communities and financial
77 burdens in the form of a civil fine and associated court fees.

78 H. The board determined that because of the inequitable enforcement of the
79 helmet regulation, a punitive approach to addressing the need for helmet use for bicyclists
80 was not appropriate and repealed the previous bicycle helmet regulation.

81 I. The board is committed to support and encourage efforts to provide education,
82 access, and helmet promotion for all-age bicyclists and other micromobility riders.

83 SECTION 2. The following are hereby repealed:

84 A. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.01.010;

85 B. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.01.020;

86 C. R&R 03-05, Section 1 (part), and BOH 9.01.030;

87 D. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.01.100;

88 E. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.07.005;

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- 89 F. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.07.010;
- 90 G. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.07.020;
- 91 H. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.10.010;
- 92 I. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.15.010; and
- 93 J. R&R 84, Section 1 (part), as amended, and BOH 9.16.010.

R&R BOH21-01 was introduced on 10/21/2021 and passed as amended by the Board of Health on 2/17/2022, by the following vote:

Yes: 11 - Baker, Daniell, de Castro, Herbold, Honda, McDermott, Morales, Mosqueda and Zahilay
No: 2 - Kohl-Welles

KING COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Joe McDermott
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Joe McDermott, Chair

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:
Melani Pedroza
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Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Board

Attachments: None

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