

## Riding in Rain and Fog

Wet weather can be slippery on two wheels, but taking some easy precautions will limit your risks. The first and most important rule for wet pavement is: SLOW DOWN! Visibility is limited in rain and fog, so use lights and reflectors when possible. Fog can also make the street surface as wet as rainfall.

### **BRAKING AND STOPPING IN WET WEATHER:**

In wet weather your brakes take longer to engage, longer to stop your bike, and it is much easier to skid or slide your wheels as you brake. Start braking earlier, and use your brakes more gradually than you would on dry ground. The water makes a lubricating layer between the metal rim of the wheel and the rubber brake pad. In order to burn the water from your brake pads, you can also “pump” your brakes gently until they begin to work.

**THE FIRST RAIN: OILY STREETS:** Watch out when it’s just rained for the first time in a long time. Streets get a coating of oil, tire rubber and other gunk that gets very slippery when you first add water. Be more careful and reduce your speed a bit on the first wet day or two of the season.

### **SLIPPERY WET PAINT AND METAL:**

Lane and crosswalk lines can be slippery when wet. Cornering too fast in wet conditions can lead to nasty falls. Utility covers, streetcars tracks, drain grates,

BART/Muni grates, and construction plates that lack non-skid coating can also be very slippery. Try to avoid these things when the street is wet. If you have to ride on them, don’t shift your weight or lean while riding on slippery surfaces.

### **PUDDLES:** What lies under the puddle?

Unless you know for sure, you may want to ride around puddles to avoid potholes, cracks in the pavement or other things that lie hidden underwater. Even the debris that gathers in these low spots can be dangerous, or cause unwanted flat tires.

### **DRESSING FOR RAIN**

For the novice and fair-weather cyclist riding in rain can be an obstacle, but you don’t have to let wet weather keep you off your bike. Good cycling clothing is well-vented and allows the rider to regulate temperature while staying dry. Most California rain –and San Francisco fog– doesn’t require a full rain suit, rain booties and a hood. Often, protecting yourself against the water sprayed up from the street is the main problem.



**FENDERS** are a great way to minimize the water and grime that comes up off the street onto you and your clothes. There are now many kinds of fenders, both permanent and “snap-on” that can be installed on

almost any bicycle. A dedicated pair of “rain shoes” will allow you to get to your destination without ruining your favorite shoes.



Townsend Street after a rain, with water on the tracks.