Unbelievable. Inexcusable. And Unacceptable.

Posted At : May 18, 2012 8:33 AM | Posted By : Rick Bernardi
Related Categories: Bicycle Law Education

Three years ago, a popular and well-known member of Chattanooga's cycling community was buzzed by a driver who claims he never saw the cyclist, even though the cyclist was, according to friends, "lit up like a Christmas tree," and was riding with "an obnoxiously bright blinking red light on the back of his bike when he was hit."

The cyclist, David Meek, was sideswiped by the passing truck and thrown under the rear wheels. He suffered severe injuries, and was taken to a local hospital. He did not survive, succumbing to his injuries.

Although the driver had sideswiped Meek, and although a 3 foot safe passing law had already been on the books in Tennessee for nearly two years, the driver was never charged with a traffic violation. In fact, as Bob detailed in False Protection, Chattanooga police seemed to be bending over backwards to invent new legal theories to exonerate the driver.

David Meek was denied justice by a police department that didn't understand, or didn't want to understand the law. But what's done is done. Three years have passed. Since then, more states have adopted safe passing laws, and slowly, the laws are beginning to be enforced.

Except, apparently, in Chattanooga, Tennnessee. Or more precisely, the enclave of Red Bank. Recently, a cyclist on a ride with the Chattanooga Bicycle Club was buzzed and run off the road, sustaining minor injuries. Another club member was able to get the license number of the fleeing vehicle, and the cyclist who had been run off the road called the Red Bank police to report the incident.

According to the cyclist, Gary Hooper, the Red Bank police officer who took his call "said there was nothing to be done because the car hadn't actually touched the rider."

Unbelievable.

Look—the law has been on the books for five years, not five minutes. That's plenty of time for law enforcement to learn about the law. There's simply no excuse for this kind of ignorance of the law by an officer sworn to enforce the law. No excuse.

Three years ago, we were shocked to learn that not one traffic citation had been issued for an unsafe pass in the entire state of Tennessee in the two years that the law had already been on the books—despite clear-cut violations of the law, backed up by credible evidence. And now, three years later, we learn that Red Bank law enforcement doesn't even know that buzzing is illegal in the State of Tennessee.

Unbelievable. Inexcusable. And unacceptable.