

Cyberpresse: Cyclist hit by a door: Stiffer penalties sought

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Gabriel Béland

Press

The doors open car in a careless manner represent a major cause of injury among cyclists, says Velo Quebec, which requires that steps be taken to educate drivers.

Last Sunday, a cyclist was seriously injured on Van Horne Avenue when it collided with a car door opened unexpectedly. The man is 56 years since in a critical condition in hospital.

According to the organization, such accidents are a real scourge in Montreal. "Motorists do not seem to understand how it can be dangerous, told The Press Director of Vélo Québec, Suzanne Lareau. When we cycled, we know. The door is the bane of cyclists. "

Section 430 of the Highway Safety Code prohibits all drivers to open a door "without ascertaining that he can perform this maneuver safely." Violating this prohibition may result in a fine 30 to \$ 60. An amount "ridiculous", says Lareau.

"The fines are so ridiculous that it has little deterrent effect. In the case of school buses, for example, is when you have doubled the fines that people began to obey the rules of the road. "

But even if the fines were more severe, it remains the responsibility of police to issue a ticket or not. Last Sunday, for example, the motorist did not initially received. A spokeswoman SPVM then explained it was "a stupid accident."

Yesterday, after several calls from The Press, SPVM assured that a contravention will be awarded in the coming days to the driver who opened the door. The fine will be \$ 30.

"It's infuriating, is launching Lareau. There are limits to impunity. "

A massive initiative

According to **Robert Mionske**, American lawyer specializing in the law of cyclists, it is extremely rare in North America that are handed tickets to motorists who have opened a door in a careless manner. "It does not send a strong message to motorists," he says.

Mr. Mionske, who represented the U.S. in cycling at the Games in Seoul and Barcelona, cites a case "unbelievable" that occurred in Wisconsin in 2008. Linda Willsey drove to Madison when she saw a door open just before it. A split second later she was lying on his back, a fractured vertebra. She was transported to the emergency room where a policeman visited him: he gave him \$ 10 a ticket for traveling too close to the car. The motorist was not penalized.

"There must be some form of punishment for drivers, says Mr. Mionske, who is himself involved in a collision with a car door last summer. Cyclists are killed or seriously injured each year while they were driving safely, just because a motorist opened his door without looking. "

Jean-Marie De Koninck, Chair of the Table Québec Highway Safety, said meanwhile that Quebec drivers especially need to be educated. Law enforcement and higher fines are not the way to go, he said. "It would take a massive and original initiative to raise awareness. Several drivers open their car door without asking a single question. "

But the problem goes far beyond the doors. He said many drivers do not recognize Quebecois simply not the right of cyclists to be on the road. "They believe they have priority," he said. It's pretty incredible. "

It is impossible to know how many cyclists face and door to each year in Montreal. The Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) has no statistics on the issue. The SPVM was not able yesterday to specify the number of tickets that are given annually to drivers who have violated section 430.

But according to Velo Quebec, just mount a bicycle to see that this is a far too common occurrence. "Many cyclists I know have suffered serious injuries after being hit by a door, says Ms. Lareau. It was an accident that often do not forgive and leaves scars for life. "