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Daytime running lights markedly improves cyclists' safety

A large-scale trial of daytime bicycle lights involving 4000 cyclists in Odense shows a 32% reduction in bicycle related accidents. The result is so significant that Alderman Anker Boye hopes that others will benefit from the trial, perhaps by changing the legislation in the area.

Odense is known as the city for cyclists where a great deal is done to increase bicycle traffic whilst simultaneously reducing the amount of accidents involving cyclists. Odense Municipality has conducted a large-scale trial in cooperation with Aalborg University where 2000 cyclists had permanent lights fitted on their bicycles which operate all day long without the use of batteries. For one year, the group continuously reported any traffic incidents. This data has now been compared to corresponding data from another group of 2000 cyclists with traditional bicycle lights.

The project has shown that the cyclists with daytime bicycle lights have 32% fewer accidents than the control group. The effect is particularly noticeable during the summer season when the reduction is up to 40%. This is consistent with accidents being particularly reduced where the effect is 35%. At the same time, accidents involving a third party are, to a higher degree, reduced by using daytime bicycle lights.

98% of the cyclists expressed satisfaction with the lights used and 60% felt safer in relation to the time before they used the lights.

"The results are so remarkable that this must generate a reaction around the country," says Alderman Anker Boye. "Imagine our experiences being used at national level to change the Danish rules for lights on bicycles. For example, it could be considered whether new bicycles should be sold with permanently fitted lights and that they are, of course, used during the daylight hours." Anker Boye sees the results as an obvious opportunity to assist the Traffic Commission in reaching their goal. The goal is to reduce the amount of mortally wounded and seriously injured persons in Denmark by at least 40% in the period 2001 – 2012.

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