



NEWS ADVISORY

Dec. 2, 2014

For immediate release

MISSOULA CYCLISTS LIGHT UP FOR WINTER

City launches seasonal bike light effort Look for us at Parade of Lights on Saturday!

City of Missoula staff members -- including Mayor John Engen and City Council members -- will be out on Saturday evening at the start of the Missoula Downtown Association's Parade of Lights. We want to draw attention to the importance of using lights on bikes at night and will have gift bags to distribute to parade spectators, each containing a bike light set, local bike map and a copy of State bike laws.

The parade starts at 6 p.m. at Fourth and Higgins and continues to the north end of Higgins Avenue where the holiday tree will be lit. The bike light promotion is brought to the public by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Program and Missoula in Motion each year when the days grow short.

"It is always important to have lights on your bike when riding at night," said Ben Weiss, Bicycle/Pedestrian Program Manager, "but it is essential when the days get short and rush hour happens in the dark. Our campaign *Be Safe, Be Seen* urges bicyclists to use lights front and back for safety."

The City has also started this year's Mayor's Bike Light Initiative, which puts 150 quality bike light sets in Police Department patrol cars. Mayor Engen launched the initiative in fall 2006 after a young cyclist died after being hit by a vehicle near the intersection of Beckwith and Higgins.

Local partners have helped the Mayor's Office each year with the wintertime effort. Missoula in Motion purchased this year's light sets.

The initiative, now in its ninth year, gives officers an immediate solution for the person biking without a light. Officers are able to give the individual a light set; it may or may not come with a ticket.

“We think bike lights save lives,” Mayor Engen said. “And we know the police see this every day. We’re happy to be able to give them the tools to help keep people safe. If we prevent even one tragedy, it’s worth the effort.”

“Cyclists riding at night need to see the road, but that’s not all,” said Police Sgt. Greg Amundsen. “It’s about being seen, too,” he said. “Being seen at night is a big safety issue.”

Cyclists are invited to join the parade on Saturday to help spread the message of the importance of bike lights and have fun too Prizes will be awarded for brightest and most festive bikes. Cyclists should meet in front of the Missoulian by 5:30 p.m. to ride to the tree lighting.

The bike lights used in the Mayor’s Bike Light Initiative are distributed only through police officers as part of their educational and enforcement efforts. They are not available at City Hall or at any other outlet.

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For interviews, contact:

Ben Weiss, Bicycle/Pedestrian Program manager
552-6352

Greg Amundsen, Traffic Sergeant
552-6333

Ginny Merriam, Communications Director (Mayor’s Bike Light Initiative)
552-6007

Ginny Merriam, Public Information/Communications Director, 552-6007 office; 546-7692 cell