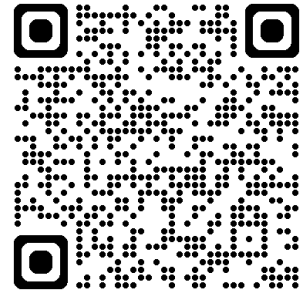


# Japan sets new fines aimed at curbing reckless cycling



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20260401160755274/>

New rules for reckless cyclists go into effect on Wednesday across Japan. Police can now issue fines to riders for relatively minor violations like holding an umbrella while cycling.

These Tokyo police officers are handing out brochures, hoping to teach people about the dozens of new offenses they'll be watching for from now on. The nationwide legislation will allow police to issue what they're calling blue tickets. On this busy street, they even caught a few rule breakers and handed out 16 warnings to cyclists over the course of an hour on Wednesday morning. Campaigns have started this week across the country to inform riders about the new system.

Accidents involving bikes can cause lasting damage. That's what one Tokyo woman found out the hard way. She was riding to work on this street when she was hit by a high school student on a bicycle who flew out of an alley. She says the teenager ignored the stop sign and rushed into the intersection without slowing down. They crashed. The woman fell off her bike, dislocating her left shoulder. Two and a half years later, she still suffers from pain and numbness in her arm and shoulder.

There are a lot of people riding bikes dangerously. If they are a little more conscious about how risky their behavior is, I think it will make for a safer and more comfortable environment for everyone on the road.

She's one of thousands of people involved in cycling collisions annually. Police counted over 67,000 accidents last year alone. 70% of those cases were caused by cyclists not following the rules. Over 3,000 of them involved pedestrians, a record high. Police are hoping that the new fines will bring those numbers down. Among the offenses that could garner you a blue ticket: wearing earbuds, ignoring traffic signs and red lights, and riding in the wrong direction. Riding on the sidewalk is also banned unless signs say otherwise or the street is too narrow or congested to ride on safely. Cycling while holding a smartphone carries the highest fine at 12,000 yen or about 75 dollars. That's why this cycling shop set up a special

corner to respond to rising demand because of the new fines. The manager says even raincoats are flying off the shelves for those worried about the new fine for using an umbrella on the road. But some cyclists who spoke to NHK said they weren't aware of the new rules and still had questions.

It's hard to know which sidewalks are hard to ride on. It's confusing.

Another says she'll have to change her riding habits.

I usually run stop signs. I should probably be more mindful of the signs as I ride.

The new system is a big change. Until now, only red tickets were handed out for serious offenses like drunk cycling. But the national police agency says that officers may still let offenders off with a warning depending on the seriousness of the violation and the rules only apply to those 16 and older.

Source: (NHK World News)

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. What is your opinion on the new rules? Do you agree with the changes or disagree?
2. Have you ever had a dangerous experience with a cyclist or while you were cycling? What happened?
3. Which offenses do you think should have the heaviest fines? Which offenses should just receive warnings?
4. Why do you think many cyclists often ignore traffic rules?
5. Can you think of any other ways to reduce accidents?