



The LEA+DRS Program

Results-Based Traffic Safety for Red Deer Road Users

BICYCLING SAFETY 2: BLIND “T” INTERSECTIONS

“If you can’t see it, it can’t be all that bad!”

That may be true in many cases, but it’s not necessarily true if you’re a bicyclist in Red Deer approaching one of the many uncontrolled “T” intersections.

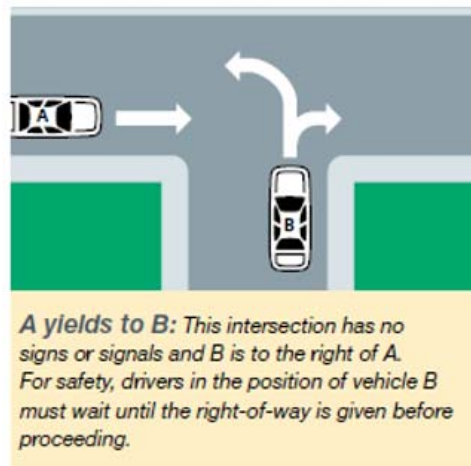
Several hazards are associated with “T” intersections.

One hazard results from the practice of not erecting intersection warning signs in urban areas. If the main road curves and/or the side road enters at a sharp angle, the bicyclist may not recognize the importance of looking for vehicles entering from the side road in sufficient time to avoid colliding with them.

A second problem arises from Section 77(2) of the Use of Highway and Rules of the Road Regulation which requires bicyclists to be as near as practicable to the right curb or edge of the roadway unless the bicyclist is making a left turn. If the bicyclist is riding next to parked vehicles, it can be impossible for a motorist leaving the side road to see the approaching bicyclist until the motorist is well into the intersection. And difficult as well for the bicyclist to see vehicles about to enter the main road from the side road.

There is, however, somewhat of a blessing in that most drivers do not follow provincial rules when navigating uncontrolled “T” intersections!

The rules of the road for B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan say the same thing when navigating uncontrolled intersections, regardless of the number of legs to the intersection. For an uncontrolled three-legged intersection, regardless of it having a “Y” or “T” configuration, the driver to the right has priority, irrespective of being on the main road or the side road. Nevertheless, in reference to the sketch below, although driver B has priority, he or she must not proceed until he or she has confirmed that the driver of vehicle A has given driver B the right-of-way. The clip below from the Alberta driver’s guide illustrates the situation.



In many cases, a YIELD sign has been erected on the side road where driver “B” is in the above sketch. The sign changes the intersection from being uncontrolled to controlled, thereby giving driver A priority over driver B. Due to the location of the sign, driver B

will know that the “T” intersection is controlled and that driver A has the right-of-way but driver A, who cannot see the sign, will not know whether he or she has priority over driver B.

The general practice, for both main and side road drivers, seems to be to treat unsignalized “T” intersections as if there is a YIELD or STOP sign on the side road. But don’t count on it, especially if you are a bicyclist in the position of vehicle A in the above sketch. If there is no YIELD sign on the side road and if you are riding in shadows next to parked cars, there’s a good chance that you will be both injured and at fault if vehicle B enters from the side road.

The two clips below use City of Red Deer webmaps of the uncontrolled “T” intersection of Richards Crescent (the main road) with Ray Avenue (the side road) to illustrate the hazard. The clip on the left identifies the roads; the clip on the right shows where vehicles could be parked, the route of a bicyclist next to the parked vehicles, and the position of a vehicle about to enter Richards Crescent from Ray Avenue.

Consider the situation facing an eastbound bicyclist, travelling in the shadows of parked vehicles, on Richards Crescent when a Ray Avenue vehicle proceeds north on Ray and turns either west or east on Richards Crescent. The bicyclist may not see the vehicle until collision is imminent; the vehicle driver may not see the bicyclist before his or her vehicle straddles the bicyclist’s path.



The most cost-effective way to increase the likelihood of the Ray avenue vehicle driver and the Richards Crescent bicyclist seeing each other in sufficient time to avoid a collision may be to ban parking in front of the 85 Richards Crescent residence. Considering the number of similar intersections in Red Deer residential areas, applying that fix city-wide would eliminate a significant number of parking spots while increasing sign maintenance and curb painting costs.

A public safety issue arises because there is no person or organization in Red Deer, as well as many other places, whose role includes informing bicyclists and motorists about the safe navigation of uncontrolled “T” intersections. If you know an organization or person with that function, please email contact information to Doug.Taylor@leadrs.ca.