

USA CYCLING

The Centerline Rule

Why do we have a centerline rule?

It is the LAW!

SAFETY, SAFETY, SAFETY

The enforcement line / center line rule is a rule of the road, and applies at all times if a road is not closed to traffic. That means that the rule applies even if no centerline is painted on the road.

The Rule:

3B1. Centerline. If a course is not closed to traffic, all competitors **must keep to the right of** the center line or enforcement line.

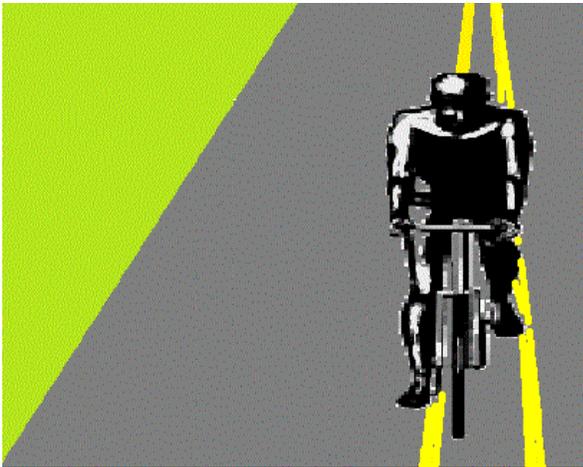
How is it interpreted?

Notice that the rule says that you have to stay to the right of the center line / enforcement line.

That means that you never touch / cross the line. [A web Link to USAC centerline discussion](#)

If a yellow or white line exists on the road, it is usually declared to be the enforcement line.

Most riders would say that the diagram below represents the limit of what is legal regarding the centerline rule. Although this seems to make sense, the rider below is in an unsafe position. Their left ear is across the centerline, placing the rider 8-10 inches into the oncoming lane, and if a car came towards them using the same logic, the rider would be injured.

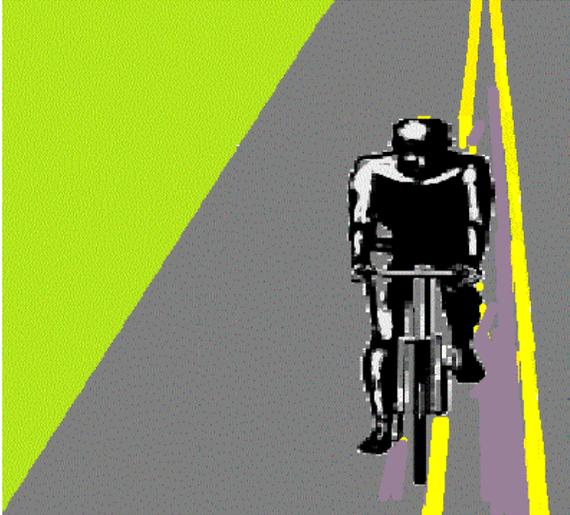


This interpretation is always wrong.

Two interpretations

1) The Finish Line interpretation

When a rider crosses the finish line, the crossing happens the moment the rider breaks the front edge of the finish line. This is the most common interpretation of the enforcement line / center line rule. Using this same interpretation which is already in use within cycling, a rider crosses the enforcement line the moment that they touch it.



The moment you touch the enforcement line, you have crossed it.

2) The Traffic Interpretation

Knowing that anything that crosses the centerline could be hit by oncoming traffic, this interpretation does not allow any part of your bike / body to cross the centerline. Imagine that you have a pair of 44 cm (18 inch) handlebars. To keep out of the oncoming lane, you would need to place your tires at least 22 cm (9 inches) from the center line. This is what the USAC Technical Director was trying to implement when they last discussed the center line rule. [Web link to discussion](#)



No part of your bike / body can be across the centerline, as it is exposed to oncoming traffic.

Knowing which interpretation will be used should be part of the race instructions, so listen up during staging of your race.

ENFORCEMENT LINE

So, what happens when there is no centerline?

Just because there is no centerline, does not mean there is no enforcement line, or that the centerline rule does not apply.

Traffic cones, course tape, pylons, saw-horses, barricades, fencing: all of these can be used to create an enforcement line.

At a recent event, a 4 lane road was part of the course. $2 \frac{1}{4}$ lanes were given to auto traffic ($1 \frac{1}{8}$ lane in each direction, to allow room for traffic cones), leaving $1 \frac{3}{4}$ lanes for the bike race.

After being given instructions that on this particular part of the course, the traffic cones were the enforcement line, several riders moved right of the cones, but left of the centerline (which was now in the middle of the coned traffic lane) into oncoming traffic.

During the post-incident discussion with the riders, they tried to argue that they had never crossed the centerline. Obviously they lost their argument, since they had crossed the enforcement line, which was constructed of traffic cones, which had been announced at the start.



Is the enforcement line the traffic cones? Or is it the yellow line?

The hard choice is what happens when there is no visible enforcement line, either painted or physical.

A typical road is made up of 2 lanes, 10-12 feet wide, for a typical width of 20 – 24 feet. Often times the pavement or asphalt is laid in such a way that the crown of the road is apparent.

The wider the road is, the less likely that riders will try to cross the centerline.

The difficulty comes when a road is less than two lanes wide. Having $\frac{1}{2}$ of 24 feet of roadway is less stressful than having $\frac{1}{2}$ of 15 feet of roadway

Make sure the riders are aware what measure is being used.

Is it the center of the road?

Is it the left mirror of the lead car?

Is it $\frac{2}{3}$ of the road unless there is oncoming traffic?

Will the finish line be closed to traffic? And if so, when does the closure start?

Make sure all riders are informed.

Road events are hard to get, hard to staff, and have a greater potential for traffic issues. We need to continue to obey traffic rules to ensure our safety and continued access to these venues.