

# Tinted Windows

Is it just me, or are new cars coming off the lot with darker factory tinted windows? Most new cars I see on the street have a dark tint even on their driver and passenger windows. They are dark enough that you cannot see the driver inside of the vehicle.

This is a problem.

Last year, when I was biking to work, I was stopped at a stop sign. A vehicle to my right slowed down to a stop — they had the right of way. I watched the vehicle, waiting for them to turn. The car's windows were tinted enough that I could not see the driver. The vehicle took a left turn toward me. I was looking directly at where the driver should be in their driver-side window as they started to accelerate — I was sure the driver must see me out in the open, standing up, in my lane on the right side of the street next to the stop sign. As the car accelerated it cut the corner, moving straight toward me. I was shocked for a second realizing this person may hit me — they did. The car accelerated straight into me and even continued to accelerate as the vehicle plowed into me. They hit me with the left side of their front bumper, breaking my bike and I fell to the ground with it. I was truly shocked they hit me. My bike was broken, and I came out of it

with minor bruising. It could have been worse.

Was this avoidable? Absolutely.

If I would have been able to see the driver in the car not paying attention, I would have shuffled out of the way to attempt to avoid getting hit.

After the incident I now make sure to wear bright/reflective colors.

But what if it was a kid on their bike? I'm tall so I was pushed on top of the hood. If it was a child or someone on an adaptive bike, trike, or hand cycle they may have been killed.

It doesn't matter if we are tall and brightly adorned if we can't make eye contact with a driver. We are completely robbed of our ability to be defensive pedestrians and cyclists.

I considered myself lucky, and when I see vehicles with tinted windows potentially turning my way, I plan to move away as quickly as possible. I put the onus on myself as if I had made a mistake and needed to correct how I bike.

I started paying a lot more attention to the vehicles with tinted windows. When I was a kid in high school, I remember it was illegal to tint your driver and passenger windows. Only people that were trying to hide drinking and driving, drug use, or for whatever other reason would get after market window tints.

But now I see vehicles rolling out of the

dealership with heavier tints — enough to where it obfuscates the driver and facial expression.

Is it the manufacturer or dealer doing this? I feel like someone should be held responsible for the accidents caused by the inability to see inside — to communicate non-verbally.

A week ago, the same incident happened to a friend of mine. She recounted she was at a crosswalk walking her bike with a flashing "walk" sign. There was a new pickup to her left, stopped. She looked at the black, reflective passenger window and could not see inside, but the truck was stopped and she followed the "walk" sign. Suddenly, the truck accelerated, turning right, and hit her with the right side of the pickup's bumper, damaging her bike and leaving her shocked. The driver rolled down the black window, said sorry, and then drove off. If they would have hit a vehicle they would have stopped and insurance information exchanged.

People I know hear of these incidents and say "See! Biking isn't safe. You should just drive." Is this the world we want to live in? Not everyone has a vehicle. Some of us cannot drive.

Do we want to be in our tinted-window carriages, confined to vehicles our whole lives to get around? I sure don't.

Tinted windows make the roads less safe for all of us.

Is there anyone advocating for visibility to make the roads more safe?

Who do you know that has been in an avoidable accident because they couldn't see the driver?

I wish this wouldn't be an issue, but with more tinted windows on the road, it's going to get worse.