

Helmet cameras protecting cyclists after vehicle conflicts

By Nick Wingfield, New York Times

WASHINGTON — When Evan Wilder went flying onto the pavement during his bicycle commute one morning here, he didn't have time to notice the license plate of the pickup truck that had sideswiped him after its driver hurled a curse at him. Nor did a witness driving another car.

But the video camera Wilder had strapped to his head caught the whole episode. After watching a recording of the incident later, Wilder gave the license plate number to the police and a suspect was eventually charged with leaving the scene of an accident.

"Without the video, we wouldn't know who did it," said Wilder, 33, who was bruised and scraped in the crash.

Cyclists have long had a rocky coexistence with motorists and pedestrians, who often criticize bike riders for a confrontational attitude, and for blowing through stop signs or otherwise exempting themselves from the rules of the road. Now small cameras — the cycling equivalent of the black box on an airplane — are becoming an intermediary in the relationship, providing high-tech evidence in what is sometimes an ugly contest between people who ride the roads on two wheels and those who use four.

Video from these cameras has begun to play an invaluable role in police investigations of a small number of hit-and-runs and other incidents around the country, local authorities say. Lawyers who specialize in representing bicyclists say they expect the use of cameras for this purpose to increase as

awareness of the devices goes up and their prices, now starting at around \$200, come down.

Some riders even argue that the technology will encourage cyclists to keep themselves in check during dust-ups with drivers.

“I know my actions before and after some event are going to be recorded if I’m the one being a jerk,” Wilder said. “It makes me want to be careful.”

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