

Thousands take part in TD Five Boro Bike Tour under heavy security

May 5, 2013 by ELI M. ROSENBERG. Special to Newsday



More than 32,000 cyclists zoomed through all five New York City boroughs Sunday as part of the TD Five Boro Bike Tour amid increased security -- a result of the bombings at the [Boston Marathon](#) last month.

The tighter-than-usual security was evident at many points along the 40-mile ride -- the 36th year of what is now the largest cycling event in the United States.

By and large, riders said they endorsed the additional safety measures.

"If this is what it takes to protect citizens and participants, then I support it," said Carline Saintilien of Queens, who rode the course with her two sisters. "I respect what the police are doing."

[advertisement](#) | [advertise on newsday](#)

No major incidents were reported during the ride, but a 51-year-old participant suffered a [heart attack](#) on the [Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge](#) around 10:50 a.m., and died shortly thereafter at a hospital, officials said. The rider's identity was not released.

The tour's planners spent weeks coordinating with local and federal law enforcement agencies, and eventually outlawed bags bigger than a fanny pack -- including most backpacks, saddle bags and hydro packs.

The tour began in downtown Manhattan and ended in Staten Island's Fort Wadsworth with live music and food, but the finish line festivities were restricted to registered event participants this year.

The new prohibitions made it more difficult for cyclists to bring extra gear and clothing and meet family at the end of the race, but were a small price to pay for safety, organizers said.

"I think people understand that in the wake of what happened in Boston that these are appropriate measures," said Ken Podziba, president and chief executive of Bike New York, which runs the tour. "I certainly hope that it's not the new normal and that next year we can resume to the way things were."

Heavily armed officers from the Emergency Service Unit -- the elite NYPD special operations force -- were at the starting line in body armor. They were joined along the course by canine units and patrol officers and members of the [Department of Homeland Security](#). NYPD helicopters continually buzzed overhead.

The NYPD also deployed its technological resources to help with security, including a new mobile surveillance system, with several movable cameras in place around the course, according to Police Commissioner [Ray Kelly](#).

[Kelly](#) said the department was responding to the events in Boston -- but admitted that it would be impossible to eliminate risk entirely from such a large public event.

"You can't police 40 miles of a route," he said. "But we can do things that make it as safe as reasonably possible and that's what we're doing."

[< back to article](#)