



MOTORCYCLE SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH 2014

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, designed to encourage all drivers and motorcyclists to “share the road” with each other. Motorcyclist fatalities increased in 2012 to 4,957, accounting for 15 percent of total fatalities for the year. This increase in motorcycle fatalities continues a tragic trend over the last 15 years, which only saw a one-year decline in 2009. Crash-related motorcycle injuries also increased from 81,000 in 2011 to 93,000 in 2012. Safe riding practices and cooperation from all road users will help reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our nation’s highways.

- Road users should never drive, bike, or walk while distracted. Doing so can result in tragic consequences for everyone on the road, including motorcyclists.
- A motorcyclist has the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as any other motorist on the roadway.
- Allow a motorcyclist a full lane width. Though it may seem as if there is enough room in a single lane for a motor vehicle and a motorcycle, looks can be deceiving. Do not share the lane: a motorcyclist needs room to maneuver safely.
- Because motorcycles are smaller than most vehicles, they can be difficult to see. Their size can also cause other drivers to misjudge their speed and distance.
- Size also counts against motorcycles when it comes to blind spots. Motorcyclists can be easily hidden in a vehicle’s blind spot. Always look for motorcycles by checking your mirrors and blind spots before switching to another lane of traffic.
- Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows motorcyclists to anticipate your movement and find a safe lane position.
- Don’t be fooled by a flashing turn signal on a motorcycle—it may not be self-canceling and the motorcyclist may have forgotten to turn it off. Wait to be sure the rider is going to turn before you proceed.
- Allow more distance – three or four seconds – when following a motorcycle; this gives the motorcycle rider more time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. Motorcycle riders may suddenly need to change speed or adjust lane position to avoid hazards such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement.

FACTS ABOUT HELMET USE

- Use of DOT-compliant motorcycle helmets decreased to 60 percent in 2012, down from 66 percent in 2011, based on the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS). The decrease was most significant among motorcycle passengers, decreasing from 64 percent in 2011 to 46 percent in 2012.
- Helmet use continued to be significantly higher in States that required all motorcyclists to be helmeted. Ten times as many unhelmeted riders died in States without a universal helmet law (1,858 unhelmeted fatalities) as compared to States with such laws (178 unhelmeted fatalities).
- In 2011, 60 percent of fatally injured motorcycle riders and 49 percent of fatally injured motorcycle passengers were not wearing helmets at the time of the crash.

FACTS ABOUT MOTORCYCLES AND ALCOHOL

- In 2011, the percentage of motorcycle operators who were intoxicated in fatal crashes (27%) was greater than the percentage of intoxicated drivers of passenger cars (23%) and light trucks (22%) in fatal crashes.
- In 2011, 30 percent of all fatally injured motorcycle riders had BAC levels of .08 or higher.
- Motorcycle riders killed in traffic crashes at night were 3.4 times more likely to have BAC levels of .08 g/dL or higher than those killed during the day (47% and 14%, respectively).
- Forty-two percent of the 1,997 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2011 had BAC levels of .08 g/dl or higher. Sixty-seven percent of those killed in single-vehicle crashes on weekend nights had BACs of .08 g/dl or higher.

TIPS FOR MOTORCYCLISTS

- Obey all traffic laws and be properly licensed. In 2011, more than one-fifth of motorcycle riders (22%) involved in fatal crashes were riding with invalid licenses at the time of the collision.
- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet and use reflective tape and gear to be more visible. NHTSA estimates helmets saved the lives of 1,617 motorcyclists in 2011.
- Never ride while impaired or distracted—it is not worth the risk of killing or injuring yourself or someone else. Plus, a DUI costs \$10,000 on average, and can lead to jail time, loss of your driver's license, and higher insurance rates.