

2012 MOTORCYCLE SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH FACT SHEET

Mission

Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month is a national initiative designed to encourage drivers of all other kinds of vehicles and motorcyclists to “share the road” with each other.

Overview

Now that warmer weather is right around the corner in most of the country, motorcyclists will soon be out in force. Drivers of cars, trucks and buses are reminded to look out for and share the road with motorcycle riders, and motorcycle riders are reminded to obey traffic laws, wear DOT-compliant helmets and other protective gear, and make themselves visible by wearing bright colors and using reflective tape.

Increasing safe riding and cooperation between all road users and motorcyclists will help to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our nation’s highways.

Share the Road Model Language

NHTSA has developed model “Share the Road” language by reviewing material used by motorcycle safety agencies and national organizations that have a vested interest in increasing motorcycle safety. NHTSA identified common themes and language from this material, which effectively conveys the importance of sharing the road safely with motorcyclists.

NHTSA encourages local, State, and national organizations to use this model “Share the Road” language in their driver awareness programs:

- Road users are reminded to never drive, bike, or walk while distracted. Doing so can result in tragic consequences for motorcyclists.
- A motorcycle has the same rights and privileges as any other vehicle on the roadway.
- Allow a motorcyclist a full lane width. Although it may seem that there is enough room in the traffic lane for a motor vehicle and a motorcycle, the motorcycle needs the room to maneuver safely. Do not share the lane.
- Because motorcycles are small, they can be difficult for other road users to see them, or judge their speed and distance as they approach.
- Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows motorcyclists to anticipate traffic flow and find a safe lane position.
- Because of its smaller size, a motorcyclist can be hidden in a vehicle’s blind spot. Always check for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and at intersections.

- Don't be fooled by a flashing turn signal on a motorcycle – motorcycle signals may not be self-canceling and motorcyclists sometimes forget to turn them off. Wait to be sure the rider is going to turn before you proceed.
- Remember that road conditions that are minor annoyances to motorists can pose major hazards to motorcyclists. Motorcycle riders may change speed or adjust position within a lane suddenly in reaction to road and traffic conditions such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement.
- Allow more following distance -- three or four seconds – when following a motorcycle so the motorcycle rider has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. In dry conditions, motorcycles can stop more quickly than cars.

Shared Respect Among All Road Users Can Save Motorcyclists' Lives

Motorcyclist fatalities increased slightly in 2010 to 4,502 accounting for 14 percent of total fatalities for the year. This increase in motorcycle fatalities for the year picks up the overall increasing trend over the last 13 years that saw a one-year decline in 2009 when 4,469 motorcyclists were killed. However, the greatest decrease in the estimated number of injured people is among motorcyclists, with an 8.9-percent decrease.

With respect to motorcyclist fatalities, fatalities among motorcyclists 50 and older increased by 119, whereas fatalities among motorcyclists under 50 declined by 84.

Per vehicle mile traveled (VMT) in 2009, motorcyclists were 25 times more likely than passenger vehicle occupants to die in a motor vehicle traffic crash and 5 times more likely to be injured.

In 2010, 42 percent of fatally injured motorcycle riders and 51 percent of fatally injured motorcycle passengers were not wearing helmets at the time of the crash.

Alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities (fatalities in crashes involving a driver or motorcycle rider (operator) with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or greater) declined by 4.9 percent in 2010 accounting for 31 percent of overall fatalities.

In fatal crashes in 2010, a higher percentage of motorcycle riders had blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher than any other type of motor vehicle driver. The percentages for operators involved in fatal crashes were 28 percent for motorcycles, 23 percent for passenger cars, 22 percent for light trucks, and 2 percent for large trucks.

Forty-two percent of the 1,921 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2010 had BAC levels of .08 g/dL or higher. Sixty-five percent of those killed in single vehicle crashes on weekend nights had BACs of .08 g/dL or higher.

In 2010, more than one-fifth of motorcycle riders (22%) involved in fatal crashes were riding with invalid licenses at the time of the collision.

NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,483 motorcyclists in 2009. If all motorcyclists had worn helmets, an additional 732 lives could have been saved.

The economic cost savings due to helmet use was approximately \$2.9 billion in 2008, and an additional \$1.3 billion could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn helmets.

According to the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS), the use of DOT-compliant helmets decreased to 54 percent in 2010, from 67 percent in 2009. Use of helmets that do not comply with the DOT standard increased dramatically from 9 percent in 2009 to 14 percent in 2010.

Over the past decade, the age group with the largest increase in motorcyclist fatalities (from 1,261 in 2001 to 2,523 in 2010) was the 40-and-older age group. During this same time period, riders of the largest motorcycles (those with engine size 1,000 cc and above) saw the largest increase in fatalities.