

# **MOTORCYCLE SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH FACT SHEET**

## **Overview**

Recent data indicates that deaths and injuries attributable to motorcycle crashes are becoming a larger portion of a grave public health problem. Motorcycle crash-related fatalities have been increasing since 1997, while injuries have been increasing since 1999.

Now that the warmer weather is around the corner and motorcyclists are out in force throughout the country, motorists and other road users are reminded to look out for and “share the road” with motorcycle riders, while motorcycle riders are reminded to follow the rules of the road and wear safety helmets and other protective gear that will increase their visibility. ALL road users are reminded to never drive, ride, bike or walk while distracted. By increasing safe riding and cooperation between all motorists and motorcyclists, we can reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our nation’s highways.

## **Mission**

Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month is a national initiative aimed at getting motorists and other road users and motorcyclists to “share the road” with each other.

## **Share the Road Model Language**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has developed model “Share the Road” language by reviewing material used by motorcycle safety agencies and national organizations that have a vested interest in motorcycle safety. NHTSA identified the common themes and language from this material that serve to effectively convey the importance of sharing the road safely with motorcyclists.

We encourage local, State, and national organizations to use the following model “Share the Road” language in their motorist 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 the motorcyclist a full lane width. Although it may seem there is enough room in the traffic lane for an automobile and a motorcycle, remember the motorcycle needs the room to maneuver safely. Do not share the lane.
- Motorcycles are small and may be difficult to see. A motorcycle has a much smaller profile than a vehicle, which can make it more difficult to judge the speed and distance of an approaching motorcycle.

- Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows the motorcyclist to anticipate traffic flow and find a safe lane position.
- Remember that a motorcyclist can be hidden in a vehicle's blind spot or missed in a quick look due to its smaller size. Always make a visual 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 riders sometimes forget to turn them off. Wait to be sure the motorcycle 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 -- 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.

### **Motorcyclist Deaths Are Rising**

In 2008 motorcyclist fatalities increased for the 11th straight year.

During 2008, 5,290 motorcyclists lost their lives in fatal highway crashes.

Nearly 50 percent of all motorcycles involved in fatal crashes collided with other types of motor vehicles in transport. In two-vehicle crashes, 77 percent of the motorcycles involved were struck in the front. Only 7 percent were struck in the rear.

Over 90 percent of all fatal two-vehicle crashes involving a motorcycle and a passenger vehicle occurred on non-interstate roadways.

Approximately 50 percent of all fatal two-vehicle crashes involving a motorcycle and a passenger vehicle were intersection crashes.

In 2008, there were 2,387 two-vehicle fatal crashes involving a motorcycle and another type of vehicle. In 41 percent of these crashes, the other vehicle was turning left while the motorcycle was going straight, passing, or overtaking the vehicle. Both vehicles were going straight in 28 percent of the crashes.