

Appraiser Blog

Motorcyclist Safety: A Call to Action



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The thrill of riding a motorcycle is undeniable, offering a unique sense of freedom and exhilaration as you navigate the open road. However, this sense of adventure comes with inherent risks that cannot be ignored. Motorcycle accidents result in a disproportionate number of fatalities on our roads. In 2021, 5,932 motorcyclists lost their lives, accounting for a troubling 14% of all traffic fatalities.

These figures represent the highest motorcycle fatality rate since 1975. To create safer roads for all, both drivers and motorcyclists must take shared responsibility. Motorcyclist safety must be prioritized by improving visibility, wearing DOT-compliant helmets, and always riding sober.



The Stark Reality of Motorcycle Riding

Riding a motorcycle is an exceptional experience, an active dance with the rhythm of the road, a thrilling blend of acceleration and precision. Whether it's your daily commute, a weekend group ride, or an off-pavement adventure, motorcycling engages your senses and evokes a unique sense of freedom. However, this freedom must be coupled with responsibility.

All states mandate the need for a motorcycle license to ensure a minimum level of skill and knowledge, along with liability insurance. For those in states without mandatory hands-on training courses, it is advisable to enroll in one to gain essential riding skills and stay safe in traffic.

Motorcycling demands heightened awareness, greater coordination, and more agility than driving a car. Riding involves unique risks not encountered in other vehicles, and riders are particularly vulnerable in accidents. Motorcycles' narrow profile makes them less conspicuous to other motorists, who may not always be looking for motorcycles, especially at intersections.

These risks, however, can be managed through proper training and education. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation offers a wealth of tips and instructional videos on both general and specific aspects of motorcycle safety.

Addressing the Mounting Crisis

Over the years, mounting evidence has highlighted common-sense measures that can mitigate motorcycle fatalities. Unfortunately, the full implementation of these solutions has fallen short, leading to an alarming rise in motorcycle-related deaths, reaching a record high of over 6,000 in 2021.

This concerning trend is partly rooted in the perception of motorcyclists as risk-takers, but it is vital to acknowledge that these risks can be mitigated without diminishing the joys and thrills that define motorcycling.

Key Measures To Truly Combat Motorcyclist Fatalities

1. **Universal Helmet Laws:** Mandatory helmet use is a fundamental step. Surprisingly, fewer than half of U.S. states require all riders to wear helmets. Well-designed helmets can reduce the likelihood of death by approximately 40% and traumatic brain injuries by two-thirds. History shows that as states weakened helmet laws, motorcyclist death rates typically increased, and the opposite held when laws were strengthened. While helmet requirements may be unpopular among some, they undeniably save lives.
2. **Anti-lock Braking Systems (ABS):** Studies have demonstrated that motorcycle ABS significantly reduces crash rates. Even when crashes aren't entirely prevented, ABS helps riders brake more effectively, preventing severe falls. The proliferation of motorcycle ABS is a bright spot in the safety landscape, with around two-thirds of 2023 models equipped with standard ABS. The U.S. should follow the lead of countries worldwide, mandating ABS on new on-road motorcycles to ensure a safer riding experience.
3. **Crash Avoidance Systems:** Preventing collisions with motorcycles is crucial. Detection systems that recognize motorcyclists can make a significant difference. Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), which is now widespread in passenger vehicles, should be extended to include motorcyclist detection. Left-turn assist technologies can address the most common type of collision between motorcycles and other vehicles. As these technologies evolve, incorporating motorcyclist detection should be a priority.
4. **Lower Speed Limits:** Lower speeds enhance road safety for all users. Many states have raised speed limits since the late 1980s, with some reaching dangerously high levels. In contrast, cities that have lowered speed limits have observed safety benefits. Reducing speed limits and enforcing speed regulations must be a focus if we intend to reduce deaths for motorcyclists and all road users.

Riders Also Play a Vital Role

While policy decisions and technological advancements are pivotal in reducing motorcyclist fatalities, riders themselves must actively contribute to their safety. Safe riding practices, situational awareness, and the use of appropriate gear are essential:

1. **Take a Safety Course**: Enrolling in a safety course helps riders understand the rules of the road, gain valuable skills, and practice handling unpredictable situations.
2. **Check the Weather**: Be mindful of weather conditions, and avoid riding in inclement weather as it can compromise your safety.
3. **Wear Protective Gear**: Ensure you wear proper motorcycle gear, including a DOT-approved helmet, goggles, leather clothing, over-the-ankle boots, and non-slip gloves. Be prepared and carry clothes that can adapt to different weather conditions.
4. **Inspect Your Motorcycle**: Regularly check your motorcycle's key components such as tires, brakes, lights, and fluids. Ensuring your motorcycle is in good condition is a vital safety measure.
5. **Obey Traffic Rules**: Follow traffic rules, use signals, and adhere to speed limits to avoid accidents.
6. **Be Visible**: Take proactive measures to enhance your visibility, including wearing bright or reflective clothing, using headlights during the day, and employing proper signals.
7. **Stay Alert**: Continuously observe the road for hazards, sand, oil, or gravel, and anticipate traffic issues.
8. **Maintain Safe Distances**: Keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you to ensure you can stop in case of emergencies.
9. **Carry a First-Aid Kit**: Be prepared for injuries by keeping a basic first-aid kit with you, including disinfecting wipes, bandages, hand sanitizer, gauze, adhesive tape, and Band-Aids.

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10. **Take Advanced Riding Courses**: Sharpen your skills by taking advanced riding courses, and learning collision avoidance maneuvers, advanced turning, control tips, and braking techniques.

Drivers Must Also Play Their Part

For all road users, it's essential to understand the unique safety challenges faced by motorcyclists, such as their size and visibility, and the dynamics of motorcycle riding. By increasing awareness and practicing mutual respect, both drivers and motorcyclists can make our roads safer for everyone.

In conclusion, reducing motorcycle fatalities is a collective effort that involves riders, drivers, policymakers, and technological advancements. By implementing a combination of practical measures and fostering a culture of road safety, we can work together to ensure that motorcycling remains an exhilarating and, above all, safe experience.

This other article may give you more helpful insights: [The Most Common Questions About Car Accidents](#)