

## **MOTORCYCLE SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH 2016 TALKING POINTS/FACT SHEET**

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, designed to encourage all drivers and motorcyclists to “share the road” with each other. In 2014, 4,586 motorcyclists were killed in traffic crashes, a decrease of 2.3 percent from 2013 (4,692). Those deaths account for 14 percent of the total highway fatalities that year. This decrease in motorcycle fatalities continues to break a tragic trend over the last 17 years, which saw only one other decline in 2009. Injured motorcyclists also decreased from 93,000 in 2013 to 88,000 in 2014.

Safe riding practices and cooperation from all road users will help reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our nation’s highways. But it’s especially important for motorists to understand the safety challenges faced by motorcyclists such as size and visibility, and motorcycle riding practices like downshifting and weaving to know how to anticipate and respond to them. By raising motorists’ awareness, both drivers and riders will be safer sharing the road.

### **TIPS FOR MOTORISTS**

- Research and state-level data has and continues to consistently identify motorists as being at-fault in over half of all multi-vehicle motorcycle-involved collisions.
- NHTSA-funded research has shown that people behind the wheels of passenger vehicles are distracted more than 50 percent of the time. Road users should never drive, bike, or walk while distracted. Doing so can result in tragic consequences for all on the road, including motorcyclists.
- It may seem inconsequential, but the improper use of a vehicle’s rear-view and side-view mirrors contributes to collisions, particularly with smaller vehicles like motorcycles. With roughly 40 percent of a vehicle’s outer perimeter zones hidden by blind spots, improper adjustment or lack of use of one’s side-view mirrors can have dire consequences for motorcyclists.
- If you are turning at an intersection, and your view of oncoming traffic is partially obstructed, wait until you can see around the obstruction, sufficiently scan for all roadway users (pedestrians and motorcyclists included), and proceed with caution. Slow your decision-making process down at intersections.
- One’s reaction time and ability to assess and respond to a potential collision, such as a lane change, is significantly hindered if there are large differences in speed among vehicles in traffic. When approaching a congested roadway, being diligent in modifying your speed to match that of the cars in traffic can be a lifesaver, particularly for motorcyclists.
- 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. Share the road, but *not* 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 follow 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**

- The use of DOT-compliant motorcycle helmets increased to 64 percent in 2015, up from 60 percent in 2014, based on the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS).
- Helmet use among motorcyclists on expressways increased significantly to 81 percent, up from 64 percent in 2013.
- Helmet use among motorcyclists in the southern states increased significantly to 78 percent, up from 65 percent in 2014.
- Use of non-compliant motorcycle helmets decreased significantly to 5 percent, from 7 percent in 2014.
- In 2014, 41 percent of fatally injured motorcycle riders and 53 percent of fatally injured motorcycle passengers were not wearing helmets at the time of the crash.

## **FACTS ABOUT MOTORCYCLES AND ALCOHOL**

- The percentage of motorcycle riders who were intoxicated in fatal crashes (27%) was greater than the percentage of intoxicated drivers of passenger cars (23%) and light trucks (21%) in fatal crashes in 2014.
- In 2013, 29 percent of all fatally injured motorcycle riders had BAC levels of .08 or higher.
- Motorcycle riders killed in traffic crashes at night were over 3 times (3.2) more likely to have BAC levels of .08 g/dL or higher than those killed during the day (45% and 14%, respectively).

- Forty-three percent of the 2,030 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2013 had BAC levels of .08 g/dl or higher. Sixty-four percent of those killed in single-vehicle crashes on weekend nights had BACs of .08 g/dl or higher.

### **TIPS FOR MOTORCYCLISTS**

- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet and use reflective tape and gear to be more visible. NHTSA estimates helmets saved the lives of 1,630 motorcyclists in 2014.
- 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.

For more information, visit [www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov](http://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov).

###