



2022 Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

TALKING POINTS/FACT SHEET

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, and the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reminds vehicle drivers and motorists that safe driving and riding practices and cooperation from all road users will help reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our nation's highways.

Know the Facts

- In 2020, there were 5,579 motorcyclists killed in traffic crashes, an 11% increase from 2019 (5,044). In contrast, an estimated 82,528 motorcyclists were injured, a 2% decrease from 83,814 motorcyclists injured in 2019. Motorcyclist deaths accounted for 14% of the total highway fatalities that year.
- Research shows that motorcyclists are significantly overrepresented in traffic crashes and fatalities each year. In fact, in 2020, per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists were about 28 times more likely than passenger vehicle occupants to die in a motor vehicle crash and were 4 times more likely to be injured.
- Motorcyclists 55-and-older accounted for 27% of motorcyclists killed in 2020. Over the 10-year period from 2011 to 2020, motorcyclist fatalities among the 55-and-older age group increased by 37%, from 1,087 to 1,486. In 2011, the average age of motorcycle riders killed in traffic crashes was 42, whereas in 2020, the average age was 43.
- In 2011 and 2020, roughly half the motorcyclists were killed in traffic crashes during the weekend versus weekday. Additionally, motorcyclist fatalities on weekdays have increased by 15% from 2,402 in 2011 to 2,765 in 2020.

Tips for Motorists

- Observe all traffic laws, yielding to motorcyclists, especially while turning at intersections
- When interacting with motorcyclists, avoid distractions that place motorcyclists and other road users at risk.
- Remember, motorcycles are smaller than most vehicles and difficult to see. Their size can also cause other drivers to misjudge their speed and distance.
- Though a motorcycle is a small vehicle, its operator still has the same rights of the road as any other motorist. Allow the motorcycle the full width of a lane at all times.
- Always use a turn signal when changing lanes or merging with traffic.
- If you see a motorcycle with a signal on, remember: motorcycle signals are often non-canceling, and the motorcyclist could have forgotten to turn it off. Proceed with caution to allow the motorcyclists the opportunity to complete the maneuver.
- Check all mirrors and blind spots for motorcycles before changing lanes or merging with traffic.
- Always allow more follow distance – beyond three to four seconds – when behind a motorcycle. This gives them more time to maneuver or stop in an emergency.
- Drive alcohol- and drug-free.
- Drive defensively.



- Obey the speed limit.
- 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, bicyclists, and motorcyclists alike), 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.
- Do not 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.
- Improper use of a vehicle's rear-view and side-view mirrors contributes to collisions, particularly with smaller vehicles like motorcycles. With roughly 40% 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.
- Allow more follow distance – 3 or 4 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 their lane position to avoid hazards such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement.
- NHTSA-funded research has shown that people behind the wheels of passenger vehicles are distracted more than 50% of the time.

Tips for Motorcyclists

- Observe all traffic laws.
- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet with a "FMVSS No. 218 Certified" label and other personal protective gear. NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,872 motorcyclists in 2017. An additional 749 lives could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn their helmets. Learn how to identify a safe, DOT-compliant helmet at www.nhtsa.gov/motorcycle-safety/choose-right-motorcycle-helmet.
- 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 operator's license, and higher insurance rates.



- Always complete rider education courses and ride with a current motorcycle license. In 2020, 36% of motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes were riding without valid motorcycle licenses.
- Thirty-four percent of all motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes in 2020 were speeding, compared to 22% for passenger car drivers, 16% for light-truck drivers, and 7% for large-truck drivers. Motorcycle riders 25 to 29 years old involved in fatal crashes had the highest speeding involvement at 45%.
- Drive and ride defensively.
- Obey the speed limit.

Facts About Helmet Use

- The use of DOT-compliant motorcycle helmets was 69.0% in 2020.
- Helmet use continued to be significantly higher in states that require all motorcyclists to be helmeted than in other states that do not.
- DOT-compliant helmet use among motorcyclists on expressways decreased slightly to 72.9% in 2020, down from 73.7% in 2019.
- DOT-compliant helmet use among motorcyclists traveling in fast traffic decreased to 70.3% in 2020, down from 72.8% in 2019.
- DOT-compliant helmet use among motorcyclists traveling in heavy traffic increased to 77.0% in 2020, up from 72.1% in 2019.
- Helmet use among riders with passengers decreased significantly from 79.7% in 2019 to 65.0% in 2020. In contrast, helmet use among passengers of riders wearing DOT-compliant helmets increased significantly from 52.9% in 2019 to 84.5% in 2020.

FMVSS No. 218 and Helmet Compliance

- The DOT requires that all motorcycle helmets sold in the United States meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 218, which outlines basic helmet safety requirements.
- Many states have laws requiring FMVSS No. 218 DOT-compliant helmets.
- In States requiring all to use helmets, 84.0% of helmets used were DOT Compliant, while 10.3% were not. In States not requiring helmet use, 54.4% of helmets used were DOT compliant, while 5.4% were not.
- The 2020 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) found two significant year-to-year change: Helmet use among riders with passengers decreased significantly from 79.7% in 2019 to 65.0% in 2020; and helmet use among passengers of riders wearing DOT compliant helmets increased significantly from 52.9% in 2019 to 84.5% in 2020.
- How to spot an unsafe helmet: Check for weight, helmet liner thickness, sturdy chinstraps, as well as the DOT certification label to assess if the helmet meets the Federal safety standard. Familiarize yourself with brand names and helmet designs that comply with DOT requirements. For example, a full-face design is a good indicator of a safe helmet. For more information on FMVSS No. 218 and novelty helmets, visit www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/14283-identify_unsafe_motorcycle_helmets_070919_v4_tag.pdf.



Facts About Motorcycles and Alcohol Use

- Motorcycle riders involved (killed or survived) in fatal crashes in 2020 had higher percentages of alcohol impairment than any other type of motor vehicle driver (27% for motorcycle riders, 23% for passenger car drivers, 19% for light-truck drivers, and 3% for drivers of large trucks).
- The highest percentages of alcohol-impaired motorcycle rider fatalities in 2020 were in the 45-to-49 age group (35%) followed by the 35-to-39 age group (33%), 50-to-54 age group (32%) and 30-to-34 age group (31%), when compared to other age groups. Forty-one percent of the 2,158 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2020 were alcohol-impaired. Forty-five percent of those killed in single-vehicle crashes on weekends were alcohol-impaired.
- Forty-one percent of the 2,158 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2020 were alcohol-impaired as compared to 42% of the 2,007 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2011. Motorcycle riders killed in traffic crashes at night were almost three times more frequently found to be alcohol-impaired than those killed during the day (40% and 14%, respectively).

For more information, visit www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov. For additional statistics, visit <https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/> and search “motorcycle” under Crash Data Publications.