

Motorcycle Safety

Language: **English** ▾

Overview

The number of motorcyclists killed in crashes dropped to 5,172 in 2017, a 3% decrease, but motorcycle riders are still overrepresented in traffic fatalities. To keep everyone safe, we urge drivers and motorcyclists to share the road and be alert, and we're reminding motorcyclists to make themselves visible, to use DOT-compliant motorcycle helmets, and to always ride sober.

Share:    

Motorcyclists At Risk

28%

MOTORCYCLE RIDERS KILLED IN 2017 WHO WERE DRUNK

Source



Choose the Right Helmet Before You

Hit the Road

Motorcycle Safety ▾

THE TOPIC

Motorist Awareness

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 drivers 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.

THE TOPIC

Motorcyclist Safety

TRAFFIC SAFETY FACTS

[MOTORCYCLES, FEBRUARY 2018 \(PDF, 478.89 KB\)](#)

If you ride a motorcycle, you already know how much fun riding can be. You understand the exhilaration of cruising the open road and the challenge of controlling a motorcycle. But motorcycling also can be dangerous. The latest data on vehicle miles traveled shows that motorcyclists are about 28 times as likely as passenger car occupants to die in a motor vehicle traffic crash. Safe motorcycling takes balance, coordination, and good judgment.

THE TOPIC

Road Ready

MAKE SURE YOU ARE PROPERLY LICENSED

Driving a car and riding a motorcycle require different skills and knowledge. Although motorcycle-licensing regulations vary, all States require a motorcycle license endorsement to supplement your automobile driver's license. To receive the proper endorsement in most States, you'll need to pass written and on-cycle skills tests administered by your State's licensing agency. Some States require you to take a State-sponsored rider education course. Others waive the on-cycle skills test if you've already taken and passed a State-approved course. Either way, completing a motorcycle rider education course is a good way to ensure you have the correct instruction and experience it takes to ride a motorcycle. Contact your state motor vehicle administration to find a motorcycle rider-training course near you.

Of the motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes in 2017, 29% were riding without valid motorcycle licenses

PRACTICE OPERATING YOUR MOTORCYCLE

Given the fact that motorcycles vary in handling and responsiveness, be sure to take the time to get accustomed to the feel of a new or unfamiliar motorcycle by riding it in a controlled area. Once you feel comfortable with your bike, you can take it into traffic. Make sure you know how to handle your motorcycle in a variety of conditions (e.g., inclement weather or encountering hazards such as slick roads, potholes, and road debris).

BEFORE EVERY RIDE

Check your motorcycle's tire pressure and tread depth, hand and foot brakes, headlights and signal indicators, and fluid levels before you ride. You should also check under the motorcycle for signs of oil or gas leaks. If you're carrying cargo, you should secure and balance the load on the cycle; and adjust the suspension and tire pressure to accommodate the extra weight. If you're carrying a passenger, he or she should mount the motorcycle only after the engine has started; should sit as far forward as possible, directly behind you; and should keep both feet on the foot rests at all times, even when the motorcycle is stopped. Remind your passenger to keep his or her legs and feet away from the muffler. Tell your passenger to hold on firmly to your waist, hips, or belt; keep movement to a minimum; and lean at the same time and in the same direction as you do. Do not let your passenger dismount the motorcycle until you say it is safe.

THE TOPIC

On the Road

WEAR THE PROPER PROTECTION

TRAFFIC SAFETY FACTS

[MOTORCYCLE HELMET USE OVERALL RESULTS, AUGUST 2018 \(PDF, 635.06KB\)](#)

[LIVES AND COSTS SAVED BY MOTORCYCLE HELMETS, MAY 2018 \(PDF, 189.07 KB\)](#)

If you're ever in a serious motorcycle crash, the best hope you have for protecting your brain is a motorcycle helmet. Always wear a helmet meeting the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218. Look for the DOT symbol on the outside back of the helmet. Snell and ANSI labels located inside the helmet also show that the helmet meets the standards of those private, non-profit organizations. Learn more about [choosing the right helmet](#).

Arms and legs should be completely covered when riding a motorcycle, ideally by wearing leather or heavy denim. In addition to providing protection in a crash, protective gear also helps prevent dehydration. Boots or shoes should be high enough to cover your ankles, while gloves allow for a better grip and help protect your hands in the event of a crash. Wearing brightly colored clothing with reflective material will make you more visible to other vehicle drivers.

RIDE RESPONSIBLY

Experienced riders know local traffic laws - and they don't take risks. Obey traffic lights, signs, speed limits, and lane markings; ride with the flow of traffic and leave plenty of room between your bike and other vehicles; and always check behind you and signal before you change lanes. Remember to ride defensively. The majority of multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes generally are caused when other drivers simply didn't see the motorcyclist. Proceed cautiously at intersections and yield to pedestrians and other vehicles as appropriate. You can increase your visibility by applying reflective materials to your motorcycle and by keeping your motorcycle's headlights on at all times, even using high beams during the day.

BE ALCOHOL AND DRUG FREE

Alcohol and drugs, including some prescribed medications, negatively affect your judgment, coordination, balance, throttle control, and ability to shift gears. These substances also impair your alertness and reduce your reaction time. Even when you're fully alert, it's impossible to predict what other vehicles or pedestrians are going to do. Therefore, make sure you are alcohol and drug free when you get on your motorcycle. Otherwise, you'll be heading for trouble.

NHTSA IN ACTION

NHTSA is dedicated to promoting safe behaviors on our nation's roads

Per vehicle miles traveled, motorcyclists are about 28 times more likely than people in passenger cars to die in a traffic crash. Motorcyclists continue to be overrepresented in traffic-related fatalities, accounting for 14% of all traffic-related fatalities, while representing only 3% of the entire registered motor vehicle fleet.

For these reasons, NHTSA is dedicated to promoting safe behaviors of motorcyclists and other motorists, as spelled out in our Motorcycle Safety 5-Year Plan and demonstrated by our [public awareness campaigns](#) like Share the Road, and Stop Impaired Riding.

Ride Sober or Get Pulled Over

WATCH THE VIDEO

Motorcycle Safety Campaigns

Motorist Awareness of Motorcycles



Share The Road



Stop Impaired Riding



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TITLE	TYPE	AUDIENCE	DATE	LANGUAGE
Motorcycle Safety 5-Year Plan PDF, 4.75 MB	Document	Advocacy Groups	05/14/2019	
Summary of Vehicle Occupant Protection and Motorcycle Laws, Fourteenth Edition PDF, 1.6 MB	Document		03/21/2019	
Motorcycle Helmet Surveys PDF, 697.03 KB	Document		09/19/2018	
June 18 Is Motorcycle and Scooter Ride to Work Day	Press Release		06/15/2018	

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TITLE	TYPE	AUDIENCE	DATE	LANGUAGE
USDOT Releases 2016 Fatal Traffic Crash Data	Press Release	Advocacy Groups	10/06/2017	

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