

Motorcyclists

In Washington State between 2008 and 2012 there were 418 fatalities among motorcycle riders. Another 3,454 were hospitalized with non-fatal injuries. These injuries can cause life-long disabilities, such as: traumatic brain injury and paralyzing spinal cord injury.

Motorcycle drivers and riders are the most vulnerable to vehicle-related death and disabling injury. They are involved in fatal crashes at a rate of 35 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT). This compares to a rate of two (2) per 100 million VMT for passenger vehicles.

In Washington, motorcyclists make up just 4% of the registered vehicles, but account for nearly 15% of traffic fatalities. Most motorcycle fatalities are males in single vehicle crashes, when the motorcycle leaves the roadway.

The main causes for motorcycle fatalities are:

- Rider impaired by alcohol and or other drugs – 60% in single-vehicle and 37% in multi-vehicle crashes.
- Rider speeding – 47% in multi-vehicle crashes.
- Inattention of motorcycle riders – 18 % in single-vehicle and 12% in multi-vehicle crashes.
- Right-of-way violations by other vehicles in multi-vehicle crashes – 25%.

Key Messages to Help Reduce Risks

- It is a fine line between the best ride and the last ride – be prepared for the unexpected.
- Take a state-approved motorcycle safety training course through the Department of Licensing.
- As required by state law, get an endorsement for the size motorcycle you will ride. Endorsed riders are less likely to be a fatality and have fewer tickets compared to unendorsed riders.
- Ride drug free and sober every time.
- Ride the speed limit (or lower speeds in bad road conditions).
- Wear your US Department of Transportation (USDOT)-approved motorcycle helmet correctly every time you ride, and have any passenger wear their helmet.
- Keep your eyes AND your mind on the road, and your hands on the handlebars.
- Avoid distractions such as texting, talking on hand-held **or** hands-free cell phones, eating, talking to a passenger, etc.
- The unexpected include: vehicles, animals, and children darting into the road; an erratic driver; something falling off a vehicle in front of you; road debris, etc.
- Reduce rushing and stress by leaving enough time to get where you need to go, and allow time for possible delays.

- Use your turn signal, do not tail gate or speed, avoid weaving in and out of traffic, and give enough space when changing lanes.

Most motorcycle crashes are not accidents – they are predictable and preventable. All roadway users have the same rights and responsibilities to make vehicle travel as safe as possible for everyone.

Information and Resources

- ◆ American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation www.aaafoundation.org
- ◆ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety www.iihs.org
- ◆ Motorcycle Safety Foundation www.msf-usa.org
- ◆ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration www.nhtsa.gov
- ◆ Washington State Department of Licensing: [WA State Licensing \(DOL\) Official Site: **Motorcycle training schools ...**](http://www.dol.wa.gov) You can learn to ride a motorcycle ...www.dol.wa.gov
www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/motoschools.html
- ◆ Washington State Injury & Violence Prevention Guide [Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries \(PDF\)](#)
- ◆ Washington Traffic Safety Commission www.wtsc.wa.gov

July 21, 2014