



2021 *Get Up to Speed on Motorcycles* TALKING POINTS/FACT SHEET

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, and the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) wants to remind vehicle drivers and motorcyclists alike to *Get Up to Speed on Motorcycles*. In 2019, there were 5,014 motorcyclists killed in traffic crashes, a decrease from 2018 (5,038). Those deaths accounted for 14% of the total highway fatalities that year.

This May, NHTSA wants to ensure that all vehicle drivers *Get Up to Speed on Motorcycles*. This campaign helps motorists understand standard motorcycle driving behaviors and learn how to drive safely around motorcycles on our roadways. Safe riding practices and cooperation from all road users will help reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our nation's highways. 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.

KNOW THE FACTS

- Per vehicle mile traveled in 2019, motorcyclists were about 29 times more likely than passenger vehicle occupants to die in a motor vehicle crash and were 4 times more likely to be injured.
- NHTSA-funded research has shown that people behind the wheels of passenger vehicles are distracted more than 50% of the time.
- 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.

TIPS FOR MOTORISTS

- 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.
- 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 their lane position to avoid hazards such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement.

TIPS FOR MOTORCYCLISTS

- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet with a “FMVSS No. 218 Certified” label and use reflective tape and gear to be more visible. 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 here <https://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 driver’s license, and higher insurance rates.
- Always drive with a current motorcycle license. It’s the law. In 2019, 30% of motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes were riding without valid motorcycle licenses.

FACTS ABOUT HELMET USE

- The use of DOT-compliant motorcycle helmets was 70.8% in 2019.
- 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 73.7% in 2019, down from 74.1% in 2018.
- DOT-compliant helmet use among motorcyclists traveling in fast traffic decreased to 72.8% in 2019, down from 76.3% in 2018.
- DOT-compliant helmet use among motorcyclists traveling in heavy traffic decreased slightly to 72.1% in 2019, down from 73.3% in 2018.

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, 89.2% of helmets used were DOT Compliant, while 9.7% were not. In States not requiring helmet use, 56.5% of helmets used were DOT compliant, while 14.8% were not.
- The 2019 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) found only one significant year-to-year change: Use of noncompliant helmets in States that do not require all motorcyclists to be helmeted increased significantly from 3.5 percent in 2018 to 14.8 percent in 2019
- 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 https://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 2019 had higher percentages of alcohol impairment than any other type of motor vehicle driver (29% for motorcycle riders, 20% for passenger car drivers, 19% for light-truck drivers, and 2% for drivers of large trucks).
- The highest percentages of alcohol-impaired motorcycle rider fatalities in 2019 were in the 40-to-44 age group (40%) followed by the 35-to-39 age group (38%), 30-to-34 age group (35%) and 45-to-49 age group (35%), when compared to other age groups. Forty-two percent of the 1,886 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2019 were alcohol-impaired. Forty-eight percent of those killed in single-vehicle crashes on weekends were alcohol-impaired.
- Thirty-nine percent of the 1,793 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2018 were alcohol-impaired as compared to 42 percent of the 1,912 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2009. Fifty-eight percent of those killed in single-vehicle crashes on weekend nights were alcohol-impaired.

For more information, visit www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov.

For additional statistics please visit <https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/> and search “motorcycle” under Crash Data Publications.