



2023 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) is urging vehicle drivers and motorists to remember that *Motorcyclist Safety Is Everyone's Safety*. Ultimately, 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 in 2020.
- 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 the weekday. Additionally, motorcyclist fatalities on weekdays increased by 15% from 2,402 in 2011 to 2,765 in 2020.

Tips for Motorcyclists

- Observe all traffic laws and always obey the speed limit.
- Wear personal protective gear and a DOT-compliant helmet with a "FMVSS No. 218 Certified" label. 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. 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.
- Obey the speed limit. 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.



Tips for Motorists

- Yield to motorcyclists, especially while turning at intersections.
- When driving, 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 motorcyclist the opportunity to complete the maneuver.
- Check all mirrors and blind spots for motorcycles before changing lanes or merging with traffic.
- 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.

Facts About Helmet Use

- The use of DOT-compliant motorcycle helmets was 64.9% in 2021, down from 69% 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 continued to decrease in 2021 at 69.5%, down from 72.9% in 2020 and 73.7% in 2019.
- DOT-compliant helmet use among motorcyclists traveling in fast traffic also continued to decrease in 2021 at 67.5%, down from 70.3% in 2020 and 72.8% in 2019.
- DOT-compliant helmet use among motorcyclists traveling in heavy traffic decreased significantly to 67.1% in 2021, down from 77.0% in 2020, an almost 10% change.
- Helmet use among riders with passengers continued a sharp decrease at 52.1% in 2021, down from 65% in 2020 and 79.7% in 2019. In contrast, helmet use among passengers of riders wearing DOT-compliant helmets increased significantly from 84.5% in 2020 to 92.1% in 2021.

FMVSS No. 218 and Helmet Compliance

- DOT requires that all motorcycle helmets sold in the United States meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 218, which outlines basic helmet safety requirements.
- Many states have laws requiring FMVSS No. 218 DOT-compliant helmets.
- In states requiring all riders to use helmets, 86.1% of helmets used were DOT Compliant in 2021, while 9.8% were not. In states not requiring helmet use, 53.4% of helmets used were DOT compliant, while 3.5% were not.
- 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/motorcycle-safety/choose-right-motorcycle-helmet>.

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.
- 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.