

Ohio State Highway Patrol

Monthly Commander's Column



Motorcycle safety is everyone's responsibility

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, and as such it is a time for both motorcyclists and motor vehicle drivers to consider the unique traffic safety elements on our roads as we see the inevitable increase in motorcycle riding associated with the warmer weather.

Last year there were 152 fatal motorcycle crashes and 3,290 injury crashes. Even though these numbers decreased from 2008 – when 212 were killed and 3,772 were injured – motorcycle safety and motorist awareness are still very important. Prior to this decrease in 2009 motorcycle fatalities had increased by about 35 percent on Ohio's roads during the previous three years.

To promote safe motorcycling and motorist awareness of motorcycle safety issues, we are once again proud to be partnering with the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) this year. Our partnership with the AMA provides meaningful avenues to promote awareness toward the three key safety messages stressed in our nationally-recognized Ride Smart. Drive Smart. program.

First, we want anyone considering motorcycling to receive the proper training and licensing before heading out on the road. As a potential rider, simple things like ensuring you have a valid motorcycle endorsement, receiving quality motorcycle training, and wearing proper safety equipment can be key elements in staying safe. Training opportunities through the Ohio Department of Public Safety's Motorcycle Ohio office can be found at <http://www.motorcycle.ohio.gov>

Riding sober is the second key message in our campaign with the AMA. Last year 56 of the fatal motorcycle crashes involved an impaired motorcyclist. We fully endorse the AMA's national Ride Straight program, which focuses attention on the severe dangers associated with operating a motorcycle impaired.

Of course, motorcycle safety is not solely the responsibility of motorcyclists. Motor vehicle drivers share in this important effort, which is why the third key safety message we share with the AMA stresses the importance for motor vehicle drivers being aware of motorcyclists.

To that end, as a motorist or a passenger, there are some important steps to become more aware of motorcyclists. Remember, a motorcycle is a motor vehicle with all of the privileges of any vehicle on the roadway. Give motorcyclists a full lane of travel. Look for motorcyclists on the highway, at intersections, when a motorcyclist may be making a left turn, and when a motorcyclist may be changing lanes.

Roadway obstructions like debris or potholes that you may ignore or not notice in your car can be deadly for a motorcyclist. Anticipate a motorcyclist's maneuver and make an effort to predict evasive actions. Allow plenty of space in front of the vehicle you are driving, and do not follow a motorcycle too closely.

Driving responsibly is about being aware of whose lives you have in your hands — literally — when you are in control of a motorcycle or a car. On behalf of your local Ohio State Highway Patrol troopers, and our associates in the AMA, please help make this a safer riding season. Remember to always Ride Trained, Ride Licensed, and Ride Sober.