

# 2006 Motorcycle Safety Month Planner

## Fact Sheet and Safety Tips

### Statistics:

- In 2004, 4,008 motorcyclists were killed and more than 76,000 were injured in traffic crashes in the United States. Motorcycle fatalities increased each year between 1997 and 2004, with a total increase of 1,892, an increase of more than 89 percent.
- About 46 percent of the motorcyclist fatalities in 2004 are in the 40-and-older age group.
- Nearly one out of four motorcycle operators (24%) involved in fatal crashes in 2004 were operating the vehicle with an invalid license at the time of the crash.
- Alcohol plays a major role in motorcycle fatalities: 41 percent of the 1,672 motorcycle operators who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2004 had blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) levels of .08 grams per deciliter or higher.

### Steps to Improve Motorcycle Safety:

- **Complete a motorcycle rider education and training course.**  
Successfully completing rider education and training gives motorcyclists the basic skills needed to ride safely.
- **Become licensed to operate a motorcycle.**  
A special endorsement on your driver's license is required in every State to legally operate a motorcycle.
- **Never mix motorcycles and alcohol.**  
Alcohol affects those skills essential to operate a motorcycle – balance and coordination. Alcohol and motorcycling are a deadly combination. In 2004, 28 percent of all fatally injured motorcycle operators had BAC levels of .08 g/dL or higher. An additional 6 percent had lower alcohol levels (BAC .01 to .07 g/dL).

### Wear a Helmet and Other Protective Gear:

- **Protective Gear serves three purposes for motorcyclists:**
  - comfort and protection from the elements;
  - injury prevention; and
  - through the use of color or reflective material, a means for other motorists to see the motorcyclist.

- **Helmets:** This is the most important piece of safety equipment. Safety helmets that comply with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 218 save lives by preventing or reducing the extent of head injuries in the event of a crash.
- **Eye Protection:** Since many motorcycles don't have windshields, riders must protect their eyes against insects, dirt, rocks, or other airborne matter. Even the wind can cause the eyes to tear and blur vision, and good vision is imperative when riding. Choose good-quality goggles, glasses with plastic or safety lenses, or a helmet equipped with a face shield.
- **Jackets and Trousers:** Jackets should have long sleeves and be made of heavy-weight, durable material like leather or denim.
- **Gloves:** Durable gloves should be a non-slip type to permit a firm grip on the controls.
- **Footwear:** Proper over-the-ankle footwear should be worn.

### **Safety Tips for Motorists**

- **Respect motorcyclists:** Remember, the motorcycle is a vehicle with all the privileges of any other vehicle on the roadway. Give motorcyclists a full lane of travel and double-check blind spots when entering or changing a lane of travel.
- **Look out:** Look for the motorcyclist on the highway, when entering or leaving a lane of travel, and especially at intersections. Because motorcycles are smaller, drivers tend to underestimate how far away a motorcycle actually is and how fast it's going. Also, drivers can be fooled by a motorcycle's flashing turn signal. Motorcycle turn signals don't turn off by themselves like automobile signals do and riders often forget about them, riding for long periods of time without realizing the blinker is on. Drivers should take an extra moment to determine a rider's intentions by making eye contact with the rider before proceeding.
- **Anticipate a motorcyclist's maneuvers:** Obstructions that you do not notice may be deadly for motorcyclists. Be aware of changing road conditions and road debris in an attempt to predict evasive actions by motorcyclists.
- **Allow plenty of space:** Don't follow a motorcycle too closely. Allow a two-second "space cushion" when following a motorcycle. In poor driving conditions, at higher speeds, or at night, allow a four-second following distance.

### **Safety Tips for Motorcyclists**

- **Make yourself visible:** Choose protective gear that will increase your visibility in addition to providing protection in the event of a crash. Wear bright colors that make you more visible and, if riding at night, wear clothing with retro-reflective materials.

- **Ride where you can be seen:** Remember that there is no one safe place to ride. Use lane positioning to your advantage to be seen and to provide extra space for emergency braking situations or avoidance maneuvers. Avoid the driver's blind spots. Make your lane moves gradually, and always signal your intentions.
- **Never share a lane with a car:** A driver may not expect you to be there and may not be aware of your presence. Remember, most drivers are not conditioned to look for motorcycles and only see other passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles.
- **Clearly signal your intentions to other drivers:** Signal before changing lanes and never weave between lanes.