



NEWS RELEASE

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MOTORCYCLE DEATHS IN MINNESOTA REACH 24-YEAR HIGH

State Officials Stress Motorist Awareness in Advance of Riding Season

ST. PAUL — With a record number of motorcyclists expected to hit the state’s roads starting this weekend, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) is urging motorists to stay alert, share the road and help reverse a deadly trend in motorcycle crashes.

Minnesota has reached an all-time high in motorcycle ownership — 225,000 motorcycles are now registered in the state, a 100 percent increase from 1996. At the same time, preliminary reports show more than 1,500 motorcycle riders were injured and 72 killed in crashes last year, the most fatalities in Minnesota since 1985, and a 200 percent increase (triple) the record low of 24 in 1997.

About half of all motorcycle crashes involve another vehicle, usually at intersections. Cheri Marti, director of DPS Office of Traffic Safety, says the small size of a motorcycle makes it more difficult to judge a rider’s speed and distance. “Motorists need to be prepared for and aware of motorcycle riders,” Marti said. “Give them space and look twice before crossing traffic or turning.”

Marti says the start of the motorcycle season is also a challenge for riders, as motorcycle skills get rusty during the off-season. Riders are advised to take safety training, wear protective gear and ride smart. “The four most common factors in motorcycle crashes are speed, inexperience, inattention, and alcohol. Those things are completely within control of the rider,” says Marti. Last year, one-third of riders killed in crashes had been drinking alcohol.

Motorcycle safety training for beginners and experts is available April through September in Minnesota. Safety information and riding tips are available at the Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center (MMSC) Web site, www.motorcyclesafety.org.

Marti also stresses wearing proper riding gear: eye protection, helmet, boots, gloves, jacket, and long pants. “Riders should wear bright colors and position themselves carefully to make themselves more visible to other drivers,” says Marti. Tips and information to increase visibility are available at www.HighViz.org.

To learn more or find a training course, visit the MMSC Web site or call 800-407-6677.

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