



NTSB

SAFETY ALERT

National Transportation Safety Board

★ **Motorcycle Deaths Remain High**

Requiring safety helmets saves lives, reduces injuries

The grim facts:

- Deaths from motorcycle crashes had more than doubled in the past decade – from 2,294 in 1998 to 5,290 in 2008 — Another 96,000 people were injured in motorcycle crashes in 2008.
- Although there was a decline in 2009, 4,462 motorcyclists, or an average of 12 motorcyclists everyday, were still lost! Another 90,000 motorcyclists were injured.
- The number of motorcycle deaths in 2009 is more than double the total number of people killed in 2009 in all aviation, rail, marine and pipeline accidents combined.
- Head injuries are a leading cause of death in motorcycle crashes.
- Motorcyclists who crash without a helmet are three times more likely to have brain injuries than those wearing a helmet.
- In addition to the tragic loss of life, the economic cost to society is enormous. In 2005, motorcyclists without helmets were involved in 36 percent of all motorcycle crashes, but represented 70 percent of the total cost of all motorcycle crashes – \$12.2 billion.
- Medical and other costs for unhelmeted riders involved in crashes are staggering, estimated at \$310,000 per crash-involved motorcyclist. That's more than four times the overall cost of accidents involving helmeted riders.

Helmets save lives

- DOT-compliant helmets (DOT FMVSS 218) are extremely effective. They can prevent injury and death from motorcycle crashes.
- Wearing a helmet reduces the overall risk of dying in a crash by 37%.
- In addition to preventing fatalities, the use of helmets reduces the need for ambulance service, hospitalization, intensive care, rehabilitation, and long-term care as a result of motorcycle crashes.
- Wearing a helmet does *not* increase the risk of other types of injury.

Motorcycle helmet laws

- 20 states, D.C., and 4 territories require all riders and passengers to wear helmets; 27 states and 1 territory have partial laws requiring minors and/or passengers to wear helmets; currently 3 states, Illinois, Iowa and New Hampshire have no helmet use requirement.
- States that have repealed laws requiring all riders and passengers to wear helmets have seen dramatically lower helmet usage rates and significant increases in deaths and injuries.
- Partial laws do not protect younger riders. Only universal helmet laws significantly reduce fatality rates for riders aged 15-20.

What should you know and do?

- When you ride a motorcycle, always wear a helmet – even when traveling short distances. Whether your ride will be long or short, at highway speeds or neighborhood cruising, a helmet is the only way to protect your head if a crash occurs. And, make sure that anyone who rides with you also wears a helmet.
- Make sure your helmet meets the federal safety standard (DOT FMVSS 218) by checking for the “DOT” sticker on the back of the helmet. Novelty (non-compliant) helmets offer little protection in a crash.
- Talk to or write your local and state legislators and urge them to require that *all* motorcycle riders and passengers wear FMVSS 218-compliant helmets.

Need more information?

- Visit the NTSB Web site: www.nts.gov