

MOTORCYCLE "MADNESS" OR AWARENESS

It's that time of year when many explore alternative forms of transportation, namely motorcycles. There are over 4 million motorcycles registered in the United States. The popularity of this mode of transportation is attributed to low initial cost, use as a choice of pleasure vehicle and fuel efficiency.

As a motorist, there are some steps to become more aware of motorcyclists.

- The motorcycle is a vehicle with the same privileges on the roadway. Give the motorcyclist a full lane of travel.
- Look for the motorcyclist at intersections and when a motorcyclist may be changing lanes. Use your signals clearly.
- Obstructions (debris, potholes, etc.) that you may ignore can be deadly for a motorcyclist.
- Don't follow a motorcycle too closely. Allow enough room for the motorcyclist to take evasive actions.

Fact Sheets

- Motorcycles are just as likely to be involved in a collision with a fixed object as are other vehicles. These fixed objects are normally guard rails, road signs, telephone poles, trees and parked vehicles.
- The head, arms and legs are most often injured in a crash.
- Helmets are estimated to be 29% effective in preventing fatalities and 67% in preventing brain injuries.
- All motorcycle helmets sold in the United States are required to meet performance standards for the minimum level of protection. There are many NOVELTY helmets on the market that appear to be motorcycle helmets but are not approved and do not offer the required amount of protection.
- Motorcyclists are about 16 times more likely as car occupants to die and 3 times more likely to be injured in a crash.
- Nearly one of three motorcycle operators, killed in crashes was operating the vehicle with an invalid license.
- All states require motorcycle operators to take a test and obtain a separate endorsement on their driver license.
- An approved course is required for riders to operate a motorcycle on military installations and for military personnel, even if they are not operating the motorcycle on post

Causes of many motorcycle crashes can be attributed to:

- Approximately half of all fatal single-vehicle motorcycle crashes involve alcohol.
- Lack of basic riding skills.
- Failure to appreciate the inherent operating characteristics and limitations of the motorcycle.
- Failure to use defensive driving techniques.
- Lack of specific braking and cornering skills.

- Failure to follow speed limits.

Selecting a suitable motorcycle:

- A motorcycle should be selected for comfortable fit and functional requirements.
- A rider should be able to touch the ground with both feet when astride the vehicle.
- If you will be carrying a passenger, make sure the motorcycle has a passenger seat and footrests for the passenger.
- Make sure you can reach and operate the controls easily.

Functional Requirements:

- Buy the power you need, but only as much as you can handle safely.
- Consider the primary use of your bike. Don't buy a "trail" bike for highway use.
- Motorcyclist must abide by the same traffic laws.
- Be aware, riding with a passenger requires more skill than riding alone. It should be delayed until you have considerable solo riding time.

PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT: Protective clothing includes long-sleeved shirt or jacket, long trousers, and full-fingered gloves or mittens made from leather or other abrasion-resistant material. Motorcycle jackets and pants constructed of abrasion-resistant materials such as leather, Kevlar®, or Cordura® and containing impact-absorbing padding are strongly encouraged. Riders are encouraged to select PPE that incorporates fluorescent colors and retro-reflective material.

Helmet: The most important piece of equipment. Helmets save lives by reducing the extent of head injuries. Make sure it fits comfortably and snugly, and is fastened for the ride. Must be DOT approved, not a novelty helmet.

Eye Protection: 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. Choose good quality goggles, glasses with plastic or safety lenses, or a helmet equipped with a face shield. Goggles, glasses, and face shields should be scratch free, shatter proof, and well ventilated to prevent fogging. Only clear shields should be used at night since tinted shields reduce contrast and make it more difficult to see.

Jackets and Trousers: Clothing worn when riding a motorcycle should provide some measure of protection from abrasion in the event of a spill. These should be of durable material like synthetic material or leather. Jackets should have long sleeves. Trousers (not shorts) should not be baggy or flared at the bottom to prevent entanglement with the chain, primary belt, foot- pegs, or other protrusions.

Gloves: Durable gloves should be of the non-slip type to permit a firm grip on the controls. Leather gloves are excellent.

Footwear: Proper footwear affords protection for the feet, ankles, and lower parts of the legs. Leather boots are best. Sandals, sneakers, and similar footwear should not be used since they provide little protection from abrasion or a crushing impact.

Follow these rules:

- Treat other motorists with courtesy and respect.
- Avoid tailgating.
- Avoid riding between lanes of slow moving or stopped traffic.
- Know and obey traffic laws, including ordinances in your community.
- Avoid creating excessive noise.

Drive Defensively:

Don't ride in a car's "**No Zone**" (blind spot). Be especially alert at intersections, watch for vehicles that may unexpectedly turn in front of you or pull out from a side street or driveway. Where vision is limited by shrubbery, parked vehicles, or buildings, slow down and be prepared to react quickly. Use signals; check the mirrors and over shoulder before changing lanes. Watch the road surface and traffic ahead to anticipate problems and road hazards. Road hazards that are minor irritations for an automobile can be a major hazard for a rider.

Experienced motorcyclists often have this advice for new riders: Assume that you are invisible to other motorists are trying to kill you. Sit out the beginning of a rain shower. Use brakes wisely, front and rear together. Brake firmly and progressively and bring the motorcycle upright before stopping. Dogs can be a problem for riders. Don't become distracted trying to kick at a dog. As you approach a dog, downshift, when you reach the dog, accelerate quickly away. Read your owner's manual thoroughly. It is the best way to learn about the specifics of your chosen motorcycle.

The Fort Lee Safety Office will provide individuals more detailed information upon request. You may register for the appropriate course on-line at <https://apps.imcom.army.mil/AIRS/>.