

Motorcycle Safety

Motorcycles can be exciting, yet possibly dangerous. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists are about 35 times as likely as passenger car occupants to die in a motor vehicle crash and eight times more likely to be injured. Remember, safe motorcycling takes balance, coordination and good judgment.

Tips for motorcyclists

- ▶ Always wear a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) compliant helmet. Look for the DOT symbol on the outside back of the helmet.
- ▶ To be easily seen by other drivers, turn headlights on, even in daylight hours.
- ▶ Handlebars should be set no more than 15 inches above the seat level for maximum control and comfort.
- ▶ Stay off the interstate unless your motorcycle is capable of cruising at interstate speed. The engine size should be 250 cc or larger.
- ▶ The best lane position for seeing and being seen is generally on the left third of the right lane.
- ▶ When traveling with motorcyclists in small groups, ride in a staggered position.
- ▶ Your stopping distance may be increased if you have a passenger or heavy bundle.
- ▶ Obey all traffic laws, ride with the flow of traffic, and leave plenty of room between your bike and other vehicles.
- ▶ Take Kentucky's Motorcycle Rider Education Course. For information call **1-800-396-3234** or visit www.kytc.ky.gov/drlic/motorcycle/kmrep.htm

Kentucky's motorcycle helmet law

Kentucky first enacted a motorcycle helmet law for all riders in 1968. This law was amended in July 1998 to require helmet use only by:

- Motorcycle operators and passengers under the age of 21;
- Motorcycle operators who possess a motorcycle instruction permit;
- Motorcycle operators who have had an operator's license for less than one year.



Helmet use facts and statistics

FACT: According to NHTSA, when the universal helmet law was repealed in Kentucky in 1998, motorcycle fatalities increased by over 50 percent.

FACT: In 2010, there were 1,522 motorcycle injuries and 94 fatalities in Kentucky. Of those injured, 793 were not wearing a helmet. Of those killed, 58 were not wearing a helmet.

FACT: NHTSA states helmets reduce motorcycle rider fatalities by 22 to 37 percent and brain injuries by 44 to 65 percent.

FACT: NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,829 motorcyclists in 2008. If all victims had worn helmets, an additional 823 lives could have been saved.

FACT: According to NHTSA's National Occupant Protection Use Survey, DOT-compliant helmet use increased from 48 percent in 2005 to 67 percent in 2009.

Share the road with motorcycles

- ▶ Motorcycles are vehicles with the same rights and privileges as any vehicle on the roadway.
- ▶ Allow the motorcyclist a full lane width. The motorcycle needs the room to maneuver safely.
- ▶ Approximately half of all motorcycle crashes involve another motor vehicle. Nearly 40 percent were caused by the other vehicle turning left in front of the motorcyclist.
- ▶ Motorcycles are small and may be difficult to see. They have a smaller profile than many vehicles, which can make it more difficult to judge the speed and distance of an approaching motorcyclist.
- ▶ Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows the motorcyclist to anticipate traffic flow and find a safe lane position.
- ▶ Remember that motorcyclists are often hidden in a blind spot or missed in a quick look due to their smaller size. Always check mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and at intersections.
- ▶ Don't be fooled by a flashing turn signal on a motorcycle—their turn signals usually are not self-cancelling. Wait to be sure the motorcycle is going to turn before you proceed.
- ▶ Road conditions that are minor annoyances to you pose major hazards to motorcyclists. Motorcyclists may change their speed or adjust their position within a lane suddenly in reaction to road and traffic conditions such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement.
- ▶ Allow a greater following distance, three or four seconds, when following a motorcycle so the motorcyclist has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. In dry conditions, motorcycles can stop more quickly than cars.



www.msf-usa.org

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1-800-396-3234
<http://drlic.kytc.ky.gov/motorcycle/kmrep.htm>

For additional information:

- **Kentucky Governor's Commission on Motorcycle Safety and Education:** <http://kentuckymotorcycleeducationandsafety.ky.gov/>
- **Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Division of Driver Licensing:** <http://drlic.kytc.ky.gov/>
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:** www.nhtsa.dot.gov

Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
Office of Highway Safety



<http://highwaysafety.ky.gov>
502-564-1438 or 1-888-374-8768