Motorcycle Safety

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists are more than 30 times more likely to die in a crash than occupants of cars, and five times more likely to be injured. Safe motorcycling takes balance, coordination and good judgment.

Tips for motorcyclists

► Wear protective gear at all times, including a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) compliant helmet. Look for the DOT symbol on the outside back of the helmet.
► Choose brightly colored clothing to make yourself more visible. If you wear dark clothing, wear a reflective vest.
► To be easily seen by other drivers, turn headlights on, even in daylight hours.
► When riding at night, wear only clear eye protection (not tinted), and keep it clean and free of scratches.
► Never ride while impaired by drugs or alcohol.
► Ride within your own skill limits.
► Obey all traffic laws and ride with the flow of traffic
► Leave plenty of room between your bike and other vehicles. Your stopping distance may be increased if you have a passenger or heavy bundle.
► Get trained and licensed. For information on Kentucky’s Motorcycle Rider Education Course, 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FACT: When the universal helmet law was repealed in Kentucky in 1998, motorcycle fatalities increased by over 50 percent. Source: NHTSA

FACT: In states without a universal helmet law, 65 percent of motorcyclists killed in 2011 were not wearing helmets. In states with a universal helmet law, 9 percent of motorcyclists killed were not wearing a helmet. Source: NHTSA

FACT: In 2014, there were 1,275 motorcycle injuries and 76 fatalities in Kentucky. Of those injured, 668 were not wearing a helmet. Of those killed, 46 were not wearing a helmet.

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

FACT: For every 100 motorcycle riders killed in crashes while not wearing a helmet, 37 of them could have been saved had all 100 worn helmets. Source: NHTSA
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 motorcyclist 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.

Kentucky Motorcycle Rider Education Program
Traffic Safety Institute
Eastern Kentucky University
521 Lancaster Avenue
Richmond, KY 40475-3102
1-800-396-3234
www.rideky.net

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/

Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
Office of Highway Safety