

MOHSS

Montana Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance

May 2023

Motorcycle Safety Month

Half the wheels, twice the caution.

May is Motorcycle Safety Month. Now that Spring is officially here, motorcycles are an excellent way to get to work. Before we air up our tires this May, there are several safety concerns to keep in mind.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), there were nearly 6,000 people killed in motorcycle accidents in 2021.¹ The NHTSA also states when it comes to miles traveled, the number of motorcycle fatalities is nearly 30 times higher than automobile deaths.²

It should come as no surprise that a quality helmet is the most critical piece of motorcycle safety apparel. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states helmets are approximately 40 percent effective in preventing motorcycle fatalities.³ In addition to helmets, wearing other protective gear such as durable pants, gloves, and a good riding jacket is a good idea.

One of the primary issues with motorcycling is the rider has an elevated center of gravity. Simply put, this means two-wheeled vehicles are inherently unstable and dangerous when turning, braking, or accelerating. In addition, motorcycles have no restraints and little protection from the elements, so it is important to keep road conditions in mind before heading out.

The phenomenon known as “Inattentional Blindness” is a state of mind that causes people to unintentionally miss things their brains aren’t ‘wired’ to see.⁴ This especially applies to drivers who avoid seeing motorcyclists on the road. Some techniques that can help are:

1. Stop or slow down at intersections whether they are controlled by traffic signs or not.
2. Make eye contact with drivers at controlled intersections (if you see their eyes, they might not see you).



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3. Watch for large animals and road debris.
4. Make sure your tires are properly inflated, and your bike is otherwise roadworthy.

Motorcycles are a great alternative to cars when the weather is good. That said, situational awareness is especially important when riding.

Be safe and we'll see you next month!

References:

- (1) <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/motorcycles>
- (2) <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813112>
- (3) <https://www.cdc.gov/transportationsafety/mc/index.html>
- (4) Kreitz C, Furley P, Memmert D, Simons DJ. Inattentional Blindness and Individual Differences in Cognitive Abilities. PLoS One. 2015 Aug 10;10(8):e0134675. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0134675. PMID: 26258545; PMCID: PMC4530948.

