



May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

ThinkFirst Urges Drivers to Get Up to Speed on Motorcycles

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The ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation is partnering with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to remind motorists to *Share the Road* during Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. NHTSA's campaign, *Get Up to Speed on Motorcycles*, offers tips for drivers of vehicles and motorcyclists.

Per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists are about 27 times more likely than passenger vehicle occupants to die in a motor vehicle crash, and five times more likely to be injured. Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month coincides with May's warmer weather, when motorcyclists begin to hit the streets.

"We want to spread the word to vehicle drivers to keep an eye out for motorcycles and to remember to *Share the Road*," said Susan Crotty, Program Development Manager, Traffic Safety, for the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation. "We encourage you to pay close attention on the roads: even the shortest lapse in a driver's awareness can result in the death of an unseen motorcyclist, due to the smaller size of motorcycles. It's vital to always look carefully for motorcycles."

In 2017, there were 5,172 motorcyclists killed in traffic crashes. Those deaths accounted for 14 percent of all motor vehicle crash deaths in 2017 and were more than double the number of motorcyclist deaths in 1997.

"Wearing a helmet is imperative to reducing the brain injuries and deaths we see due to motorcycle crashes," notes Dr. Shelly Timmons, a neurosurgeon at Penn State Hershey Neurosurgery, immediate past president of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons and ThinkFirst Board of Directors member. "Just as motorists benefit from buckling their seat belts, wearing a helmet can significantly increase survival rates of motorcyclists in crashes." NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,870 motorcyclists in 2017 and that 750 more lives could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn helmets.

Tips for Motorists

Because vehicle drivers are at the controls of a much larger machine, it is imperative they keep close watch for motorcyclists. Drivers should follow these tips to prevent a crash with a motorcycle:

- Allow the motorcycle the full lane width. Although a motorcycle is a small vehicle, its operator still has the same rights of the road as any other motorist.
- Always signal when changing lanes or merging with traffic to alert others on the road.
- If you see a motorcycle with a signal on, trust it with caution: motorcycle signals are often non-canceling, and the motorcyclist could have forgotten to turn it off. Always ensure that the motorcycle is turning before proceeding.
- Check all mirrors and blind spots for motorcycles before changing lanes or merging with traffic, especially at intersections.
- Always allow more follow-distance - three to four seconds - when behind a motorcycle. This gives more time to maneuver or stop in an emergency.
- Never drive distracted or impaired; drive within the speed limits.

Tips for Motorcyclists

At the same time, motorcyclists must take extra precautions to guard against drivers who may not see them. Motorcyclists should follow these tips to prevent a crash:

- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet and other protective gear.
- Be properly licensed and obey all traffic laws.
- Use hand and turn signals with every lane change or turn.
- Wear brightly colored clothes and reflective tape to increase visibility.
- Never ride distracted or impaired; ride within the speed limits.
- Drive as safely as you would in a vehicle, staying within lanes and not weaving in and out of traffic.

Whether you drive a vehicle or a motorcycle, you can help prevent motorcycle crashes. For more information on motorcycle safety, visit www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/motorcycles.

About ThinkFirst

The ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit organization with the mission to prevent brain, spinal cord and other traumatic injuries through education, research and advocacy. ThinkFirst provides instructor training and program materials to injury prevention professionals at hospitals and other settings that provide community awareness programs for reducing traumatic injury. Programs focus on children and teens, infant safety for new parents and falls prevention for older adults. ThinkFirst's road safety programs are funded, in part, by the Illinois Department of Transportation and General Motors. For more information, visit www.thinkfirst.org.

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