

Get Your Motor Running

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- People have had a love affair with motorcycles for more than 100 years and the passion is still going strong today. The thrill of the open road, the sound of a powerful V-twin engine or of a high-revving, inline-four cylinder engine are all part of the huge draw to motorcycles. The best way enthusiasts can continue to enjoy their passion is to always wear the proper personal protective equipment when out on the open road.

Helmets help save lives! The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration estimates that helmets saved 1,546 motorcyclists' lives in 2005, and that 728 more could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn helmets. Helmets are estimated by the NHTSA to be 37-percent effective in preventing fatal injuries to motorcyclists.

These days, the type and brand of clothing worn by motorcyclist is almost

Almost 60 percent of motorcyclist fatalities occur at night. - NHTSA

as important as the rig their riding down main street. Many bikers choose their ride to match their jackets, helmets, pants, and gloves or vice versa. Sport bike enthusiasts zip through town with matching jackets and bikes everyday. No matter what color or manufacturer being worn, always ensure that it's functional and protective as well as stylish.

Every rider knows that they are inherently taking more risk on a motorcycle than if in they chose a different means of getting around town. Per vehicle mile, motorcyclists are about 34 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die in a traffic crash, according to the NHTSA. That's why it is so important to have the basic gear to help keep your knees in the breeze. Here are the basic requirements for all military personnel riding a motorcycle.

1. Always wear a Department of Transportation approved helmet that's fastened under the chin.
2. Wear shatter resistant goggles or a face shield properly fastened to the helmet.
3. Wear boots or sturdy shoes that cover the ankle. It's also important that the boots or shoes don't have long heels that might make it difficult to catch yourself in case of emergency.
4. Wear a long sleeved shirt or jacket, long pants and full fingered gloves intended for use on a motorcycle.
5. Wear a brightly colored outer upper garment during the day and something reflective at night or during inclement weather.

Motorcycle rider safety goes way beyond just the type of clothing worn while riding. To be safer on a motorcycle, the operator has to constantly plan ahead and be completely

Helmet use among fatally injured motorcyclists was below 50 percent. -- NHTSA

aware of their surroundings. When out on the road, just ride! There's a time and a place for showing off, and it's not on the road. There are plenty of venues for stunt riding off the main

highways and byways. It's also important to remember that riders shouldn't be using headphones or a cellular telephone while operating a motorcycle.

All motorcycle operators should have a government issued license to operate the vehicle; all military personnel have to take a motorcycle safety course in order to operate the vehicle on any military installation. Riders can even inform non-riders about the hazards of riding to help increase awareness of motorcycle riders on the road.

Nearly one out of four motorcycle operators in fatal crashes in 2005 were operating the vehicle with an invalid license, according to NHTSA.

Almost one-third of the fatally injured operators did not have a proper license. - NHTSA

People will never lose their passion for things that thrill them. To help ensure that everyone can enjoy continue to enjoy the thrill of the open road, look twice and save a life and always wear a helmet when riding.

For more information about motorcycle safety and statistics, please visit the NHTSA website at www.NHTSA.gov or the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF), a national, nonprofit-organization promoting safer motorcycling at www.MSF-usa.org.

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