



STATE SAFETY OFFICE
HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
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LATHAM, NEW YORK 12110



SAFETY MESSAGE 22-04

April is Motorcycle Safety Month

As the weather gets warmer, it will be time to get the motorcycle out of the garage and back on the road. Before we do that, it is important to be made aware of the hazards associated with riding. Motorcycle riders are 29 times more likely to die in a crash, and 4 times more likely to be injured, based on a comparison of vehicle miles driven, than drivers and passengers of other types of vehicles. The majority of fatal crashes, 52.61%, involved a motorcycle and one other vehicle. According to the NHTSA, in 2019, motorcycle accidents in the U.S. claimed the lives of 5,014 riders and injured another 84,000.

The Most Common Causes of Motorcycle Accidents

The behavior of drivers and motorcyclists appears as the underlying [cause of accidents](#), including:

- Alcohol and drug impairment.
- Distracted driving.
- Reckless driving.
- Speeding.
- Road rage.
- Poor or impaired visibility.
- Drowsy or sleepy.
- Improper lane use, including lane splitting.

The NHTSA reports that 42% of motorcyclists killed in single-vehicle crashes were impaired by alcohol, and 30% of riders did not have a valid license to operate a motorcycle.

Motorcycle Accidents

- You are about 30 times more likely to die in a motorcycle accident than in a car accident.
- Motorcycle accidents show an astonishing 80% injury or mortality rate, while car accidents are around 20%.
- Motorcyclists over the age of 40 are injured in accidents about 20 times more often than drivers of the same age. Motorcycles make up only 3% of all registered vehicles, but more than 5% of highway deaths.

Motorcycle safety tips

- **Take a safety course.**
 - A safety course will teach you the rules of the road for motorcycles. You will also learn the appropriate actions to take in unpredictable riding situations that can arise. Driving a motorcycle requires skill and good judgment and a safety course can help you practice these.
- **Check the weather before heading out.**
 - Rain, ice, and snow can compromise your ride. Driving in these elements is hazardous for bikers because you have less traction than a car and visibility is lower. Choose a different day if inclement weather is in the forecast.
- **Wear motorcycle gear.**
 - Motorcycle gear protects you from the elements, debris, and road rash. Appropriate gear includes a DOT-approved helmet, goggles, leather jacket, leather pants or chaps, over the ankle boots and non-slip gloves. Dress in layers to adjust to any changing weather throughout the day.
- **Inspect your motorcycle before each ride.**
 - It's a good idea to inspect your bike before you ride to ensure it is as safe as possible. Check your headlights, taillights, turn signals, brakes, fuel, oil, tire pressure, mirrors, handlebars, and horn.
- **Obey traffic rules, use your signals, and drive the speed limit.**
 - This may sound remedial, but it's important to follow traffic rules, use signals and drive the posted speed limit to avoid accidents. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, in 2009 48% of motorcyclist deaths were caused by excessive speed.
- **Be visible.**
 - You cannot assume you are visible to other drivers. According to The Hurt Report published by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration in 1981, 75% of accidents involving motorcycles are due to the fact that other drivers did not see the motorcycle. Here are some ways to remain visible: Avoid other drivers' blind spots; Drive with your headlights on even during the day; Wear reflective or bright clothing, and always use your turn signals and hand signals.
- **Be observant and watch for road hazards.**
 - Driving defensively enables you to anticipate traffic problems and road hazards. Sand, oil, and gravel can make you lose traction. Bumps and potholes are equally dangerous and should also be avoided. Cross railroad tracks at the appropriate angle.
- **Stay at a safe distance.**
 - Tailgating is not safe. It is recommended to stay at least four seconds away from the vehicle in front of you. This will allow you to stop in an emergency situation. Also, it is good to have an escape route in mind such as moving to the shoulder should you not be able to stop in time.

- **Carry a first-aid kit.**
 - Keeping a basic first-aid kit with your motorcycle is a good idea in case of injury. It should include, disinfecting wipes, bandages, hand sanitizer, gauze, adhesive tape, and Band-Aids.
- **Take an advanced riding course.**
 - Practice and increase your skills by taking an advanced riding course. You will learn collision avoidance maneuvers, advanced turning, control tips and braking techniques.

To find previously published Safety Messages go to our NYARNG Safety Website:

<http://dmna.ny.gov/safety/>

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