



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Deadly Motorcycle Crashes Are Increasing

OLYMPIA, WA — May is national Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, and officials are concerned that fatal motorcycle crashes have increased in Washington. The Department of Licensing (DOL) and Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) are reminding drivers of all motor vehicles, including cars, trucks and motorcycles, to safely share the road.

Twenty-four motorcycle riders have died in crashes so far in 2020. In April alone, there were 12 motorcycle fatalities which was 46 percent of all traffic deaths in the state that month. There have not been that number of rider deaths in the month of April in over a decade.

"We are concerned about the death of so many motorcyclists in 2020 with the traditional riding season still to come," said Pam Pannkuk, Acting Director of the Washington Traffic Safety Commission. "We hope to prevent further carnage by working with DOL to promote rider training and education."

From May 3-10, eight motorcycle riders died in crashes on Washington roads. This includes three rider deaths in separate crashes on a single day. Speeding, losing control in corners and curves, and riding under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs are the main contributing factors in these crashes.

"Operating a motorcycle at high speeds often has deadly consequences," said Chris Johnson, Owner and Trainer at Washington Motorcycle Safety Training. "Speed, depth perception, cornering, and braking are very different on a motorcycle than in a car."

A common myth is that most motorcycle crashes are caused by other motor vehicles committing errors and hitting a motorcycle. So far in 2020, rider behavior or action is the major contributor in 70 percent of the fatal motorcycle crashes.

"The Department of Licensing is committed to work with our training partners to make training and education available, accessible, and affordable to the riders in our state," said Bryan Jackson, Assistant Administrator of the Motorcycle Safety Program. "More skill and better decision making can save lives."

Six of the 24 motorcycle fatalities in 2020 involved another vehicle interfering with the motorcycle's path of travel. With more motorcycle riders on our roads this time of year, drivers should remember to watch out for motorcycles. Before you change lanes,

before you turn left, before you pull out into traffic, look twice for motorcycles.

This concerning early increase in motorcycle rider deaths in 2020 comes after a 13 percent increased in motorcycle rider traffic death in Washington from 2018 to 2019. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently reported that motorcycle fatalities across the country decreased one percent over the same time period.

A motorcycle awareness and safety campaign called "It's A Fine Line" promotes safe riding through social media outlets including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. And DOL continues to use targeted social media messaging, as well as in-person rider outreach, to encourage training and inform riders of the inherent risks of motorcycling.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/itsafineline/wa/videos>

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