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Watch for Motorcycles – May is Motorcycle Awareness Month

JEFFERSON CITY –Motorcyclists and motorists are encouraged to safely “share the road” this May in observation of the national Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. All motorists are reminded to watch for motorcycles and to be extra alert to help keep motorcyclists safe, while motorcyclists are reminded to make themselves visible to other motorists.

Motorcyclists are much more vulnerable than passenger vehicle occupants in crashes. Research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists are about 37 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die in traffic crashes.

“More and more motorcyclists are getting out and riding,” says Leanna Depue, chair of the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety’s executive committee. “Drivers of all vehicles need to be extra attentive. A motorcycle is one of the smallest vehicles on our roads, often hidden in a vehicle’s blind spot. Everyone needs to aggressively look for them.”

Very often, drivers of cars and trucks don’t see motorcycles, not until the last second, or sometimes not at all. Motorcycle operators have to anticipate the moves of other drivers and be extra cautious of road conditions and debris.

“Motorcyclists have responsibilities, too,” Depue says. “They should follow the rules of the road, be alert to other drivers, never ride while impaired or distracted, and always wear a Department of Transportation-compliant helmet and other protective gear.”

Motorcycle experts recommend motorcyclists also complete some type of training before getting out on the road. There are 26 training locations in Missouri. You can find the one nearest you at www.mmsp.org.

Motorcycle use is growing in Missouri. In 2008, there were 332,225 motorcycle operators in Missouri. In 2010, that number had grown to 356,183. Fatalities have jumped around in that same period, going from 107 in 2008 to 84 in 2009 and 93 in 2010. Disabling injuries, however, are on a steady decline with 750 in 2008 to a low of 591 in 2010.



Drivers tips to help keep motorcyclists safe on our roadways:

- Always allow a motorcyclist the full lane width—never try to share a lane.
- Always make a visual check for motorcycles in mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and at intersections.
- Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic.
- Wait to be sure the motorcycle is going to turn when they have on their turning signal, before you proceed.
- Allow more following distance, three or four seconds, when behind a motorcycle.
- Never drive while distracted.

Tips for motorcyclists:

- Avoid riding in poor weather conditions.
- Wear brightly colored protective gear and a DOT-compliant helmet.
- Use turn signals for every turn or lane change, even if you don't think anyone will see it.
- Combine hand signals and turn signals to draw more attention to yourself.
- Use reflective tape and stickers to increase conspicuity.
- Position yourself in the lane where you will be most visible to other drivers.
- Never drive while impaired.

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