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# MOTORCYCLE FACT SHEET

February 2010

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- Forty-seven of 50 states have some type of motorcycle helmet legislation. Only Iowa, Illinois and Colorado have no motorcycle helmet law. Twenty states require helmet use for all riders and passengers while 27 others require helmets only for riders under age 18.
- During 2009, Iowa motorcycle fatalities totaled 49, down 4 from 53 deaths in 2008.
- In 1996, Iowa motorcycle fatalities reached a modern low of 16.
- Over the last five years, more than 80% of all persons killed while riding motorcycles in Iowa were not using helmets.
- Nationally, 5,290 motorcyclists and moped riders were killed in 2008. That figure is up by more than 3,000 deaths or 145% since 1997.
- Iowa's population of motorcycle operators is growing older. Iowans ages 45-54 represent 18% of all licensed drivers, but they make up 34% of all licensed motorcycle operators.
- Nearly 6 of 10 Iowa licensed operators are age 45 or older.
- During 2008, over 240 motorcyclists were seriously injured in Iowa crashes.
- During 2008, the estimated total economic cost of motorcycle crashes in Iowa exceeded \$100 million dollars.
- While motorcycle crashes account for approximately 2% of all reported crashes in Iowa, they account for 14% of all fatalities and 12% of all serious injuries in the state.
- National estimates indicate that the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled for motorcycles is at least 30 times greater than the rate for passenger cars.
- Iowa had a helmet law from September 1, 1975 to July 1, 1976. Fatality rates per 10,000 motorcycle registrations were 40% lower during that time than for the same time period one year prior. Fatality rates during the time of the helmet law were 30% lower than for the same periods in 1976-1977.
- National figures indicate that nearly two-thirds of all motorcycle/passenger vehicle crashes involve passenger vehicle operator error.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that unhelmeted riders are three times more likely to suffer a fatal head injury and twice as likely to suffer serious head injuries compared with riders wearing helmets.
- Iowa crash data for 2001-2009 indicates that 24% of all hospitalized unhelmeted motorcyclists suffered severe traumatic brain injury. The comparable figure for helmeted riders was 0%.

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**Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau**



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**Iowa Department of Public Safety**

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515-725-6123

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