
MOTORCYCLE FACT SHEET

October 2012

- During 2011, Iowa motorcycle fatalities totaled 34, down 43% from the 60 deaths in 2010.
- In 1996, Iowa motorcycle fatalities reached a modern low of 16. In the last decade, Iowa has averaged 49 motorcycle fatalities each year with a high of 61 deaths in 2007. Already this year, Iowa has had 43 motorcycle riders killed in traffic crashes, a 26% rise from this time last year.
- Nationally, 4,502 motorcyclists were killed in 2010. That number is up slightly from the 4,469 deaths in 2009. An additional 82,000 people were injured in U.S. motorcycle crashes in 2010.
- 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.
- 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.
- Per vehicle miles traveled, motorcyclists are about 30 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die in a traffic crash, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). In 2010, 51% of all motorcycles involved in fatal crashes collided with another type of motor vehicle in transport. In two-vehicle crashes, 75% of the motorcycles involved were struck in the front. Only 6% were struck in the rear.
- In 2010, 35% of all motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes were speeding, compared to 23% for passenger car drivers, 19% for light-truck drivers, and 8% for large-truck drivers. Also in 2010, motorcycle riders in fatal crashes had BAC levels of .08 or higher than any other type of driver (23% for passenger cars, 22% for light trucks and 2% for large trucks).
- Over the last five years, more than 83% of all persons killed while riding motorcycles in Iowa were not wearing helmets.
- Forty-seven of 50 states have some type of motorcycle helmet legislation. Only Iowa, Illinois and New Hampshire have no helmet law. Twenty states require helmet use for all riders; 19 require helmets for riders under age 17, one state requires helmet for those under age 18 and eight other states require helmet use by those age 20 and younger.
- Iowa had a helmet law from September 1, 1975 to July 1, 1976. Fatality rates for motorcycles were 40% lower during that time than for the same time period one year prior.
- NHTSA estimates that helmets saved 1,550 motorcyclists' lives in 2010 and that 706 more could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn 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%.

Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau



Iowa Department of Public Safety

515-725-6123

www.iowagtsb.org