

# Motorcycle Riders Foundation

## Motorcycle Statistics Fact Or Fiction?



**Analysis** A number of inaccuracies and inconsistencies have been uncovered in examining data related to motorcycle crashes, injuries and fatalities. If the information is incorrect it can only lead to theories and conclusions that are also incorrect, or at the very least suspect.

**Solution** Since much of the data is obviously flawed and most of the conclusions are therefore speculative at best, the only true solutions to motorcycle safety are proactive measures which prevent a collision from occurring at all rather than reactive steps that may offer some level of injury reduction only after a crash has already taken place. Rider education that prepares the motorcyclist to interact with other road-way users by learning and practicing the skills necessary for hazard avoidance and developing a strategy to deal with real world traffic is the primary component of a comprehensive motorcycle safety plan. Additionally, educating all motor vehicle operators to be alert and free of impairment as they share the road with others is critical in deterring crashes caused by inattention.

### Training and Awareness are the Keys...



Examples of how the motorcycling community works to address and implement these measures are as follows:

**Lobby** for state legislated rider education programs and work with state program coordinator to develop and promote training courses.

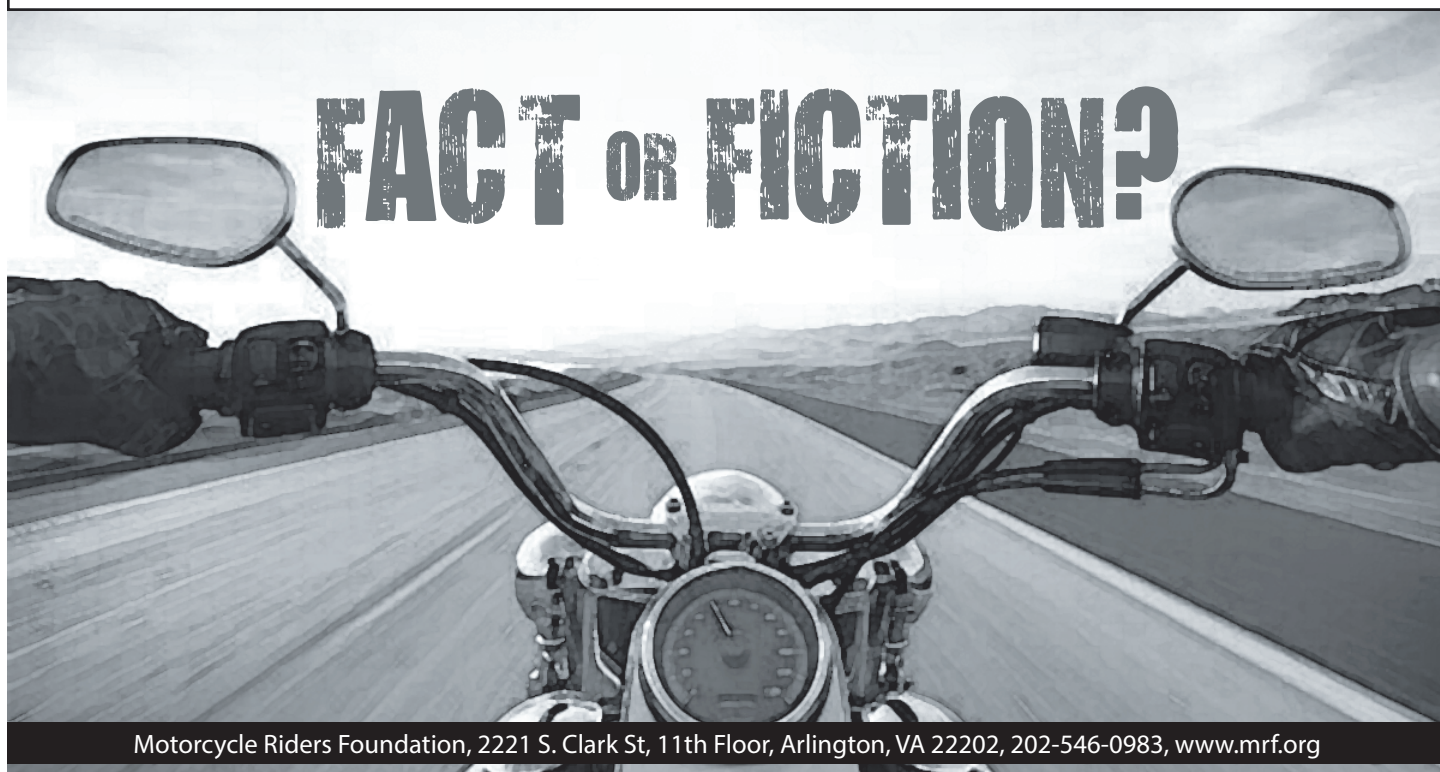
**Present** "Share the Road" programs to driver education classes, civic and social organizations and public meetings.

**Introduce** "Right of Way" legislation that provides prosecutors more opportunities in cases where a motorist's negligence causes injury or death to another.

**Create** Motorcycle Safety and Awareness Month to remind all motor vehicle operators of motorcyclists' presence on the road.

**Deliver** "Ride Straight" messages within the motorcycling culture encouraging everyone to ride and drive free of impairments.

*For more information, contact the Motorcycle Riders Foundation, 202-546-0983, [legislative@mrf.org](mailto:legislative@mrf.org)*



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**Possible Errors?** When errors, omissions or inaccuracies are discovered in reports or statistics it makes any conclusions or recommendations based on those findings suspect. Additionally, small numbers can be easily skewed by slight or seemingly insignificant variations. Furthermore, numbers may be exploited if uncharacteristic highs or lows are used as a baseline. None of these facts are intended to argue against helmet use, but rather to demonstrate that imposing a helmet law is not the solution to motorcycle safety. Individual states need to maintain the ability to determine what measures best address the needs of their residents as suggested in the National Agenda for Motorcycle Safety (NAMS).

Virtually all current motorcycle fatality comparisons are referencing 1997 as a baseline. The 2,116 fatalities reported for 1997 represents an all time low.

During one or more years from 1997-2003, 20 states reported zero vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for motorcycles. Included among those states, South Dakota which plays host to a half million motorcycling enthusiasts in Sturgis each August.

The August 2007 "Traffic Safety Facts" from NHTSA points out that two of the states with the highest increase in motorcycle fatalities were Alabama and California which have universal helmet laws.

The same document advises that Alabama is also among the states with the highest percentage increase in motorcycle fatalities at 69.4%.

The report shows that 12 states with universal helmet laws experienced increased fatalities while at least 19 states without such laws recognized a decrease.

This statistical summary also lists 110 fatalities in Indiana for 2006 while information maintained by the Indiana State Police and published in the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute's 2006 "Traffic Safety Facts" lists 96 fatalities for the same period.

The Motorcycle Industry Council has reported 14 consecutive years of increased sales of new motorcycles. This obviously results in increased exposure, a fact that is often omitted.

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