

Motorcycle Riders Foundation

Motorcycle Statistics Fact or Fiction?



Analysis A number of inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and erroneous conclusions have been uncovered in examining recent data related to motorcycle crashes, injuries, and fatalities published by the Centers for Disease Control as well as by news outlets reporting on such data. If the information is incorrect it can only lead to theories and conclusions which are also incorrect or, at the very least, highly suspect.

Solution Since much of the data is erroneous, the conclusions based on that data is also erroneous. The only true solutions to motorcycle safety are proactive measures which prevent a collision from occurring at all rather than reactive steps that may or may not offer some level of injury mitigation only after a crash has already taken place. Rider education which prepares the motorcyclist to interact with other roadway 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 coordinators to develop, promote and improve training courses.

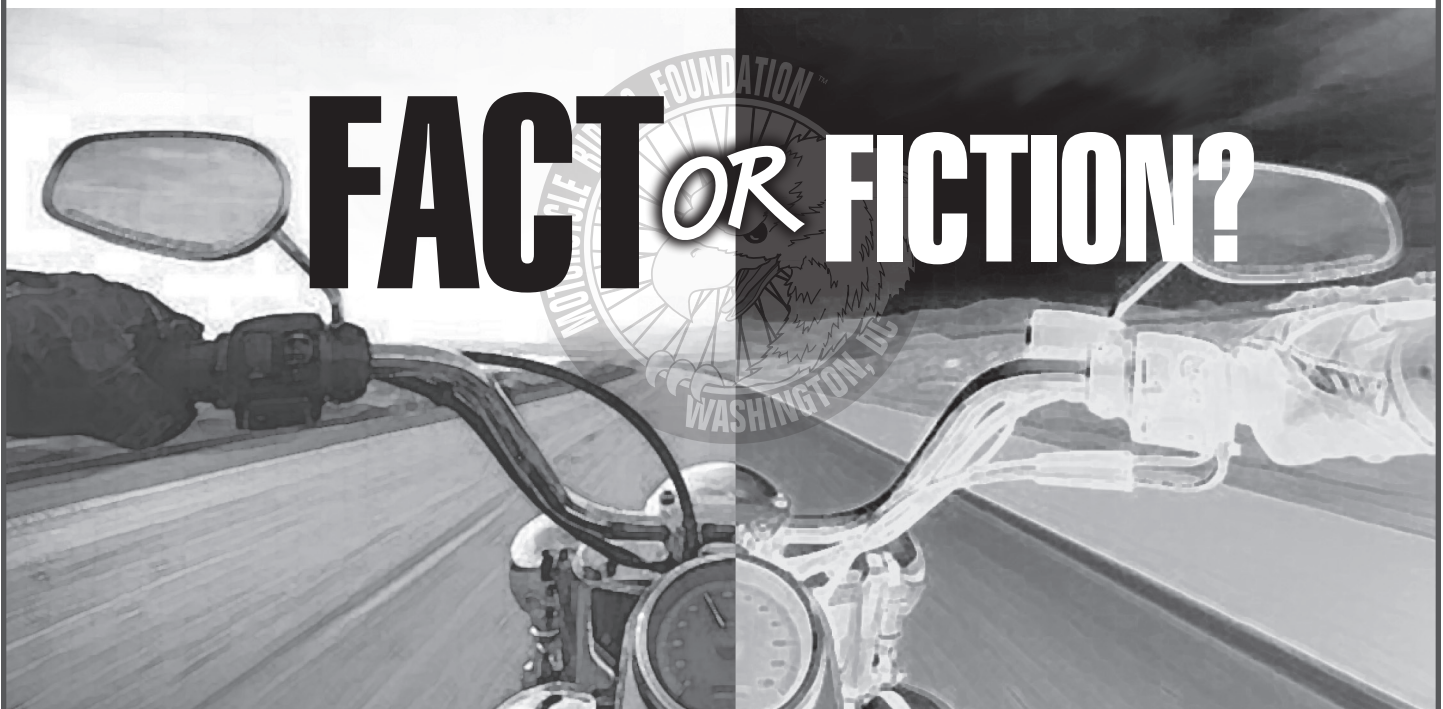
Present "Share the Road" programs to driver education classes, civic and social organizations and public meetings.

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



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FACT OR FICTION?

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Possible Errors? When errors or inaccuracies are discovered in reports or statistics, it calls into question the integrity of the results. None of these facts are intended to argue against helmet use, but rather to demonstrate a mandatory helmet law is not the solution to motorcycle safety.

FACT A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control demonstrated that of the 14,283 motorcycle fatalities which occurred nationwide between 2008 and 2010, 8,226, or 57.6% were wearing helmets when they were killed.

FACT According to data from both the U.S. Census Bureau the National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration, in 2009, 20 states and the District of Columbia accounted for 40% of total motorcycle registrations and 42 % of total motorcycle fatalities nationwide even though they had mandatory motorcycle helmet laws. The other 30 states which either allowed adult riders to choose whether to wear a helmet or simply had no law at all accounted for 60% of total motorcycle registrations and 58% of motorcycle fatalities.

FACT Reports that assert that motorcycle fatalities have nearly doubled since 2000 fail to take into account the increase in registered motorcycles. When one takes into consideration the increase in registered motorcycles, one sees that motorcycle accidents per registered motorcycle have actually decreased since 2000, or at the very least, have remained relatively unchanged. In 2000, there were 2,862 fatalities for 4,903,000 motorcycles registered. That means 0.058% of registered motorcycles were involved in a fatal accident. In 2010, there were 4,502 fatalities for 8,368,000 motorcycles registered. That means 0.053% of registered motorcycles were involved in a fatal accident.

FACT Given the lack of information available as to the causes of death in motorcycle fatalities, measuring the overall life-saving effectiveness of motorcycle helmets is speculative at best. J. Lee Annest, Ph.D., M.S., Director, Office of Statistics and Programming for the CDC has admitted that the CDC does not have motorcyclist injury deaths tabulated by body region/part nor is he aware of anyone that does. He further admits that with deaths, there are usually multiple injuries and the primary body part affected is often difficult to determine.

FACT States that allow adults to choose whether to wear a motorcycle helmet do not see higher motor vehicle insurance rates. Conversely, states that have mandatory motorcycle helmet laws do not experience higher motor vehicle insurance rates. Of the top five most expensive states for motor vehicle insurance four have mandatory motorcycle helmet laws. Of the five least expensive states for motor vehicle insurance only one has a mandatory motorcycle helmet law. To take it even further, only two of the ten cheapest states for motor vehicle insurance have mandatory helmet laws. The other eight states either allow adults to choose for themselves or, as in the case of Iowa, simply have no law at all.

FACT States that allow adults to choose whether to wear a motorcycle helmet do not experience increased health care related costs. In 2010, the Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a study of daily inpatient hospital expenses by state. Of the twelve most expensive states for daily inpatient hospital expenses seven had mandatory helmet laws. Of the twelve least expensive for daily inpatient hospital expenses only four had mandatory helmet laws. The other eight states either allow adults to choose for themselves or, as in the case of Iowa, simply have no law at all.

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