

Rider Review Fall 2009



The State of Motorcycle Safety

The 2008 crash data are in, and the news isn't good. Motorcycle deaths nationwide increased again for the 11th year in a row.

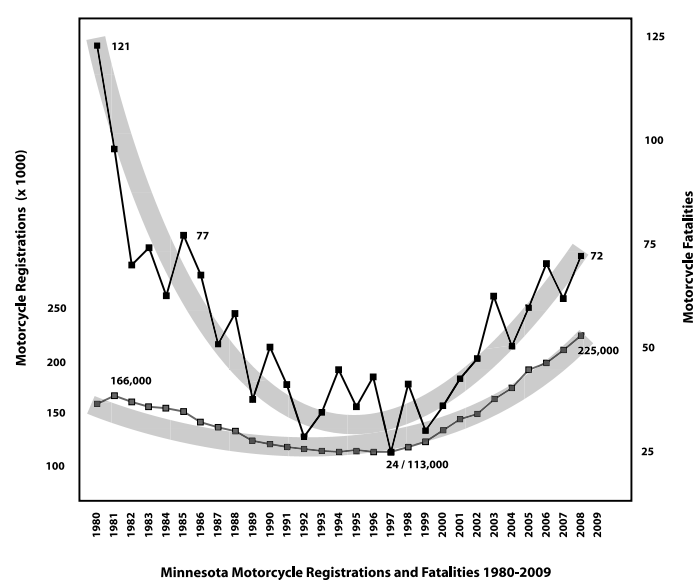
Motorcycle fatalities in Minnesota have reached levels not seen since the 1980s. This is especially concerning because overall traffic fatalities have decreased to levels not seen since the 1940s. Year after year, the positive gains from increased seat belt use, impaired driving and speed enforcement, teen driving restrictions, and child passenger safety have been offset by the steady increase in motorcycle fatalities.

Many riders try to explain it away, saying, "There are more riders, therefore, more fatalities." While true, unfortunately, this appears to be only half the story. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the number of registered motorcycles has increased 75 percent since 1997. During the same time, the number of motorcycle fatalities increased 144 percent—rider deaths have increased at a rate nearly double that of registered bikes.

In Minnesota, the number of registered bikes has increased 99 percent since 1997, from 113,000 to 225,000. During the same time, the number of motorcycle fatalities has increased 200 percent, from a record low of 24 in 1997 to 72 in 2008—the highest number since 1985. Motorcycles represent only 5 percent of registered vehicles, but account for 16 percent of traffic fatalities in Minnesota. This is especially compelling considering our riding season is only six to eight months long.

It is interesting to note, however, that motorcycle crashes in Minnesota have increased only 68 percent since 1997—less than the increase in motorcycle registrations. What this tells us is that riders are crashing less, but crashes are more severe.

What were the top contributing factors in motorcycle crashes in 2008?



Attributed to Motorcycle Riders in Single- and Multi-Vehicle Crashes:

Illegal/Unsafe Speed	245
Rider Inattention/Distracted	175
Rider Inexperience	167
Chemical Impairment	88
Total	675

Attributed to Other Drivers in Multi-Vehicle Motorcycle Crashes:

Failure to Yield Right of Way	215
Driver Inattention/Distracted	118
Improper/Unsafe Lane Use	34
Improper Turn	32
Total	399

Nationwide, motorcycle crashes are 50/50 multi-vehicle/single-vehicle. In Minnesota, the ratio is closer to 44/56, meaning the majority of crashes (56 percent) are single-vehicle events in which no other vehicle was involved. This

comes as a surprise to most riders, who feel that other drivers are the biggest risk they face. However, the numbers clearly show that riders are the ones most in control of their safety.

So what steps can a rider take to avoid becoming a statistic? Based on the contributing factors, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety and the Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center recommend:

1. Slow down. Ride only as fast as traffic, visibility, and weather conditions allow, and always obey the speed limit. The higher the speed, the less time and space you have to observe hazards, make decisions, and take action.
2. Pay attention. When you're on the motorcycle, drive the motorcycle—don't just ride on it. Driving safely requires 100 percent concentration and focus. The journey is more important than the destination.
3. Be realistic about your riding ability. Just because you can squeeze the levers and twist the throttle doesn't mean you know how to ride. Work constantly to improve your skills. Whether you're a new, returning, or experienced rider, take a training course every year to keep your skills sharp and help identify areas you need to improve. And hit the books over the winter—there are dozens of great riding books out there to fill you full of new ideas ... or give you new ways of looking at old ideas.

4. Separate drinking from riding—it's the simplest thing you can do to ensure your safety. Do not ride if you're going to be drinking, and do not drink if you're going to be riding. In 2008, almost half of the riders killed had been using alcohol. Choosing to drink and ride is a very poor decision, one that can get you hurt, arrested, or killed. Save the drinks for after the ride.

5. Educate other drivers—friends, family, colleagues—about motorcycle safety. "Because bikes are smaller, it is more difficult to judge their speed and distance." Urge other drivers to use great care when turning in front of a moving motorcycle. "When in doubt, just let them go by before you pull out."

Year	Rate*	Fatalities	Registered Motorcycles
1980	3.4	121	158,000
1981	3.0	96	166,000
1982	2.9	70	159,000
1983	2.5	73	156,000
1984	2.2	62	154,000
1985	2.7	77	151,000
1986	2.7	66	141,000
1987	2.4	51	135,000
1988	2.9	58	129,000
1989	2.1	37	123,000
1990	2.7	50	120,000
1991	2.6	40	117,000
1992	2.1	28	116,000
1993	2.7	34	115,000
1994	3.0	43	113,000
1995	2.8	35	114,000
1996	3.4	42	113,000
1997	2.4	24	113,000
1998	3.8	40	118,000
1999	2.9	29	123,000
2000	3.0	35	132,000
2001	3.4	42	143,000
2002	4.0	47	149,000
2003	N/A	62	162,000
2004	3.7	50	174,000
2005	4.3	59	185,000
2006	4.7	70	198,000
2007	3.7	61	210,000
2008	4.3	72	225,000

*Fatality rate per 100 motorcycle crashes

Motorcycle Safety Advisory Committee

The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Advisory Committee provides input to the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and recommends strategies to improve the safety of motorcycle riders and their passengers. The group meets regularly to discuss laws and policies, motorcycle safety program budget and administration, legislative initiatives, crash data, rider training, and public information and education.

The committee consists of 16 men and women of all ages and backgrounds from across Minnesota. Advisors to the group

include Bill Shaffer, Motorcycle Safety Program Coordinator (DPS); Joan Rasmussen, Rider Training Project Manager (MnSCU); Pat Hahn, Public Information and Education Coordinator (DPS); Kent Barnard (Mn/DOT), and Tom Workman, Special Advisor to the Governor (ABATE).

The committee tackled quite a few subjects during the last year. Topics of discussion were:

- Mandatory rider training, rider training incentives, and financial aid for rider training courses;

- Graduated licensing and tiered licensing;
- Motorized bicycle/moped licensing and registration requirements;
- Unlicensed riders, law enforcement, penalties for license violations, and diversion programs;
- Deer-motorcycle crashes, cable median barriers, and brake light modulators.

Over the last year, the group has made three recommendations to the Commissioner of Public Safety:

- Recommended that Minnesota not make rider training mandatory;

- Recommended the Department of Public Safety should treat all registered two-wheel vehicles as motorcycles and eliminate the moped registration and licensing requirements entirely;
- Recommended legalization of motorcycle brake light modulators.

To apply for committee membership or learn more about its mission, members, or meetings, go to www.motorcyclesafety.org and click on "What is the MMSC?"

Go High-Viz! Campaign Update

In March 2008, the Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center (MMSC) launched the "Go High-Viz!" campaign to educate riders about conspicuity (visibility) products, techniques, and strategies. The MMSC is pleased to announce that the campaign has won the 2008 Motorcycle Safety Foundation "Outstanding Media" award.

The campaign objectives are to increase motorcyclists' use of high-visibility clothing and conspicuity products 10 percent by 2010 and reduce the number of multi-vehicle crashes—particularly those in which other drivers "don't see" motorcycle riders—10 percent by 2010. The campaign's primary tool is the Web page www.HighViz.org.

Motorcycle riders place great value on their individuality and freedom of choice, and each rider generally has a riding system that's unique—even if that means having no system at all. The strategy used is one that allows for individual choice: visitors to www.HighViz.org can choose from up to 20 recommendations to increase their conspicuity, each with a point value. Visitors are encouraged to choose those techniques that best fit into their riding system and add up points to become a "Perfect 10." An interactive computer quiz gives visitors a baseline conspicuity rating and offers specific recommendations in order to reach 10 points.

The campaign will run from March 2008 through September 2010, and uses a combination of print ads, flyers, word of mouth, special events, paid media, and earned media. The most popular tactic so far has been

the campaign flyer printed on back of a reflective decal, distributed widely throughout Minnesota and available for free through the Web site. To date, the MMSC has distributed approximately 75,000 reflective flyers. The flyers are simple, offer a few quick tips on visibility, and can be peeled and placed on a rider's helmet, luggage, bike, etc. for instant results.

To date, the Go High-Viz! Web page has logged more than 76,000 visitors from 100 countries, increasing the overall number of visitors to the MMSC Web site 17 percent, and increasing the number of page views an astounding 334 percent, from 150,000 page views in 2007 to 660,000 in 2008. The most popular tips are the reflective/fluorescent vest (4 points), strategic lane positioning (2 points), headlight modulator (1 point), and reflective decals (1 point).

Based on a 2008 survey of motorcycle owners, however, no change has been noted in rider behavior so far—the use of high-visibility clothing and motorcycle modifications has not increased noticeably—although awareness of the campaign increased 8 percent from 2007 to 2008.

There is positive news on the crash data front, though it should not be directly attributed to the campaign: even though

the number of motorcycle crashes increased from 1,623 in 2007 to 1,633 in 2008, the proportion of multi-vehicle crashes decreased from 45.2 percent to 43.2 percent. Additionally, the number of times "failure to yield right of way" and "inattention/distracted" were identified as contributing factors (attributed to

	2007	2008	% Change	2010 Goal
All Motorcycle Crashes	1,623	1,633	+ 0.6%	1,550
Multi-Vehicle Motorcycle Crashes	733	706	- 3.7 %	660
Failure to Yield Right of Way	228	215	- 5.7 %	205
Driver Inattention/Distracted	128	118	- 7.8%	115

other drivers) in crash reports also decreased. Again, the decrease in these numbers cannot be directly attributed to the Go High-Viz! campaign—but they will ultimately be used to help evaluate the campaign, so the numbers are, at the very least, encouraging.

To learn more about the campaign goals, objectives, strategies, tactics and evaluation method, go to www.motorcyclesafety.org and click on "Ad Campaign."

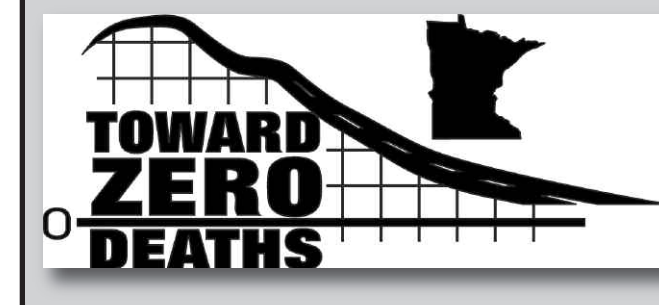


The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center Has Joined Facebook®!

For MMSC updates and riding tips, you can become a fan at www.facebook.com, or visit www.motorcyclesafety.org and click the Facebook® link on the home page.

The T Z D Initiative

The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center is part of Minnesota's Toward Zero Deaths program—the state's cornerstone traffic safety initiative. The goal of T Z D is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries through a "4 E" approach: enforcement, education, engineering, and emergency response. T Z D combines the efforts of a diverse network of state and local partners to address traffic safety issues specific to regions. The T Z D goal is Minnesota has fewer than 400 annual traffic deaths by 2010.



Rider Training Update

The sheer popularity of motorcycle riding, along with last summer's high fuel prices, drove Minnesota's rider training program to its highest levels ever last year—a total of 10,626 riders took a motorcycle safety course in 2008, and approximately 8,800 new motorcycle endorsements were issued through the program.

However, in 2009, the demand for motorcycle safety training has dropped—enough so that many courses have been cancelled. As of August 31, about 7,500 riders have taken a safety course this year, down 15 percent from last year. At this rate, it is estimated that 9,500 riders will take safety training this year—leaving 2,300 course openings to go unfilled.

A 2008 survey of Minnesota motorcycle owners found that two out of five riders (43.5 percent) have taken a training course in the last 25 years. With an estimated total of 175,000 active riders in the state, that leaves a total of nearly

100,000 riders who are without any current training. What's keeping these riders from attending a safety course?

THINK YOU'RE TOO GOOD FOR SAFETY TRAINING? THINK AGAIN.



The Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club took the MMSC Advanced Motorcycle Training course together in Eveleth in 2007. Among the nine riders pictured here, there were 346 years of combined riding experience.

NO MATTER HOW GOOD YOU THINK YOU ARE, THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN.

Call 800-407-6677 or visit www.motorcyclesafety.org.

isn't the correct one, you're not going to get a second chance. "I've ridden for years without an accident." Okay ... but how long will that luck hold out? What have you done to stack the deck in your favor?

"What can they possibly teach me?" Maybe nothing. Maybe everything. The fact is: you don't know what you don't know. Don't you think it's worth it to at least find out?

If you've never had professional motorcycle training, your first reaction in an emergency may be the wrong one—with disastrous results. At the very least, instruction and practice in skills such as visual directional control, braking, countersteering, low-speed maneuvering can reduce anxiety and make riding more enjoyable. See www.motorcyclesafety.org for full descriptions of the basic, intermediate, and advanced motorcycle training courses offered in Minnesota.

Year	Riders Trained	Training Course Sites
1986	375	41
1987	559	63
1988	1,117	91
1989	1,265	100
1990	1,604	110
1991	1,664	117
1992	2,013	125
1993	2,071	130
1994	2,655	120
1995	3,306	75
1996	3,392	90
1997	3,461	79
1998	4,043	80
1999	4,671	78
2000	4,548	76
2001	5,370	53
2002	7,709	37
2003	8,003	27
2004	9,030	28
2005	8,729	29
2006	8,763	28
2007	9,352	26
2008	10,626	27