

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board Urges All Motorists to “Share the Road”

Poughkeepsie, NY – May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. The Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board (DCTSB), in partnership with the NYS Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee, and State, County, and local law enforcement, reminds motorists and motorcyclists alike to “share the road” to help prevent motorcycle crashes, deaths and injuries on the roads.

“Motorcyclists are out in force as the weather gets warmer, so May is the perfect time for Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month,” said DCTSB Administrator William C. Johnson. “Nationally, fatal crashes with motorcycles are on the rise, and proper helmet usage is on the decline. Here in Dutchess County, we can make our roads safer and save lives with more awareness of motorcyclists and by following basic safety rules.”

Statistics show an alarming national trend: in 2012, 4,957 motorcyclists were killed in traffic crashes, a continued increase from 2010. Those deaths account for 15 percent of the total highway fatalities that year. Injured motorcyclists also increased from 81,000 in 2011 to 93,000 in 2012. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that 1,617 lives were saved in 2011 because of proper helmet usage, but another 701 lives could have been saved if helmets had been worn.

Wearing a helmet is an important way for a motorcyclist to stay safe, but all motorists all play a part in ensuring safe roads. “All road users need to share the responsibility of keeping the roadways safe. By following road signs, obeying speed limits, staying focused on the road, and by minimizing distractions, untold deaths and injuries could be prevented,” noted Robert Simpson, Director of SmartRider- Motorcycle Safety Training Program and DCTSB Board Member.

Simpson offered the following tips to drivers on how to prevent a fatal crash with a motorcycle:

- Though a motorcycle is a small vehicle, its operator still has all the rights of the road as any other motorist. Allow the motorcycle the full width of a lane at all times.
- Always signal when changing lanes or merging with traffic.
- If you see a motorcycle with a signal on, be careful: motorcycle signals are often non-canceling and could have been forgotten. Always ensure that the motorcycle is turning before proceeding.
- Check all mirrors and blind spots for motorcycles before changing lanes or merging with traffic, especially at intersections.
- Always allow more following distance – three to four seconds – when behind a motorcycle. This gives them more time to maneuver or stop in an emergency.
- Never drive distracted or impaired.

Motorcyclists can increase their safety by following these steps:

- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet and other protective gear.
- Obey all traffic laws and be properly licensed.
- Use hand and turn signals at every lane change or turn.
- Wear brightly colored clothes and reflective tape to increase visibility.
- Ride in the middle of the lane where you will be more visible to drivers.
- Never ride distracted or impaired.

“By following basic safety rules, we can all help prevent crashes,” concluded William Johnson. “Our message is for all drivers and riders: Share the responsibility of keeping our roads safe—always share the road.”

For more information on motorcycle safety, visit www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/Motorcycles.

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