

SafeDriver Monthly Newsletter

May 2021



Florida Dangerous for Motorcycles

A rash of recent fatal motorcycle crashes in Florida have traffic safety experts worried. The latest year the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has figures for is 2018 but they show a startling figure. Florida is the third largest state in terms of overall population but it leads the nation in motorcycle fatalities. In spite of having much higher population numbers, both California and Texas had fewer motorcycle fatalities than Florida.

Motorcycle fatalities occur 27 times more frequently than occupant deaths in automobile crashes. The most obvious reason for that is the lack of protection compared to that afforded by automobiles but the reasons are a bit more complex than that.

Lack of helmet use – Unlike many other states, Florida doesn't have a universal helmet law requiring all riders, regardless of age, to wear a helmet. In Florida, riders aged 20 and under are required to wear a helmet however, anyone over the age of 21 with \$10,000 worth of medical coverage can ride helmet free. Helmets may not seem to offer much protection but imagine your unprotected head bouncing down the highway at 45 mph. Helmets have been proven to save lives.

Speed – Just like the overall traffic death rate, speed is responsible for approximately one-third of all motorcycle fatalities. High speed reduces the rider's ability to spot hazards ahead and to react in a dangerous situation. The higher the speed, the greater the crash forces exerted on the body.

Alcohol – Thirty-nine percent of motorcycle riders killed in single vehicle crashes were impaired. Riders killed in crashes at night were almost three times more frequently impaired than those killed in crashes during the day.

Other drivers – In crashes involving motorcycles and automobiles, the most frequent excuse heard from automobile drivers is “I didn’t see him coming!” before pulling out in front of the motorcycle. Drivers, especially young drivers, are used to looking for larger vehicles and frequently ignore the presence of smaller vehicles such as motorcycles and bicycles. Young drivers need to be taught to check twice for motorcycles. Another thing they need to be aware of is that the motorcycle may be approaching much faster than it appears. Drivers have to make sure they see the motorcycle and that they have plenty of time before pulling out into the roadway.



NHTSA

Risk Factors for Teen Drivers

While the number of fatal teen crashes per year has steadily declined since 2005, the picture may not be quite as rosy as it may seem. There were several reasons for the decline that had nothing to do with teen driving behavior.

- Fewer teens are getting driver licenses than before. What used to be a right of passage for teens on their 16th birthday is no longer the case as more and more teens postpone getting a license.
- The economic downturn in 2008 resulted in fewer traffic deaths overall as fewer people were commuting to work and fewer people could afford to drive.
- Graduated driving license laws passed by the states are designed to give teen drivers more time to gain driving skills before they are fully licensed.
- Cars are much safer now than they were even ten years ago. Manufacturers are building cars to better protect the passenger compartment and adding safety features such as lane departure warnings, active cruise control that slows the vehicle when it gets too close to the vehicle ahead and blind spot warnings. Safety

features that were required by the federal government such as anti-lock brakes, electronic stability control, and back-up cameras all contribute to lowering the fatality rate.

However, when it comes to teen driving behavior, many of the old behaviors still hold true and the fatal crash rate between boys and girls has remained steady throughout the years with more than 60 percent of the fatal crashes being caused by boys compared to less than 40 percent for girls. The risk of being involved in a fatal crash is three times higher per mile driven for drivers, aged 16 to 19 than for drivers 20 and up.

For boys, speeding is the primary factor in fatal crashes. Speed lessens the time a driver has to react to a dangerous situation and increases the crash forces.

For girls, driver distraction is the main culprit. Cell phones and passengers make up the majority of the distractions. That's why graduated driver license laws in many states limit the number of teen passengers a new driver can carry.

While training your teen to drive, they need to be made aware of these risk factors and the dangers of engaging in them.

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The Dangers of Energy Drinks

A 21 year old man in London, England has suffered heart failure and kidney failure after excessive use of highly caffeinated energy drinks over the previous two years. He has been in the hospital for two months and is facing the possibility of organ transplants.

We have written on this issue before but it bears repeating. Excessive use of highly caffeinated energy drinks can lead to caffeine intoxication which causes anxiety and aggressive behavior. They can also lead to organ failure and death. Just because they are sold in stores doesn't mean they are safe if they are abused.

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