

From The Beat To The Bench May 2011 Motorcycles

Escalating gasoline prices means more people riding motorcycles, which get better gas mileage than automobiles. Obviously, motorcycles will be utilized more now that the weather is warmer.

In 2006 we had 302,705 licensed motorcyclists in Ohio. In 2010 there were 398,868 motorcyclists. In order to obtain a motorcycle license a person must pass a test to demonstrate the ability to exercise ordinary and reasonable control of a motorcycle. However, if you successfully, complete the basic rider course certified by O.D.O.T within 60 days the skills test can be waived and you only need to take a written knowledge test. Also any motorcyclist under the age of 18 years or having a "novice" designation must wear a protective helmet. Ohio law requires that a person have a motorcycle license. The charge of operating a motorcycle without a license is a first degree misdemeanor with a maximum 6 months jail and up to a \$1,000.00 fine.

The Ohio Department of Public Safety's office of Criminal Justice Services is kicking off its Ride SMART motorcycle safety campaign. The Ride SMART safety campaign is aimed at reducing motorcycle deaths and injuries. The O.D.P.S. established the Ride SMART campaign in 2009 to raise awareness for motorcycle safety. Ohio had an increase of eight motorcycle fatalities last year, following a 23 percent decrease from 2008 to 2009. In 2010 Ohio had 169 motorcycle fatalities and in 2009 161 down from 213 in 2008. Ride SMART will address all aspects of motorcycle safety including: Ride Sober, Ride Motorcycle Endorsed, Ride Alert, Use the right Gear, ride Trained and Ride SMART.

The motorcycle season is already underway and Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month is officially set in May. We want to get the word out to motorists that they must watch out for motorcyclists and that motorcyclists must always Ride SMART.

O.D.P.S. continues to work with traffic safety partners on education, enforcement and engineering efforts to reduce motorcycle deaths and injuries. The goal is to have a safe riding season this year.

Partners of the Ride SMART campaign will reach out to as many motorcyclists and motorists as possible to remind them that everyone plays a critical role in motorcycle safety. Motorcycle Ohio (MO) will distribute materials with safety messages at bars and establishment that host "Bike Nights", work with local law enforcement, Ohio State Highway Patrol to offer various training classes, public service announcements, funding high visibility enforcement to discourage high risk behaviors like drinking and riding and to get the word out to share the road and watch for motorists and Ride SMART.

Alcohol is a major contributor to motorcycle collisions, particularly fatal collisions. Studies show that 50% of all riders killed in motorcycle crashes had been drinking. Only one-third of those riders had a BAC above legal limits. The rest had only a few drinks in their systems, enough to impair their riding skills. Motorcyclists' abilities are impaired well before reaching the .08 BAC level. Riding "under the influence" of alcohol poses physical and legal hazards for every rider.

Visit the following websites for motorcycle licensing information: www.motorcycle.ohio.gov or www.publicsafety.ohio.gov .