



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **MOTORCYCLE ROAD DEATHS: NOT “JUST FOR KIDS” ANY MORE**

*Fatal Crashes, Alcohol Use Increase Among Older Riders*

ST. PAUL — Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) reports that motorcyclist deaths—especially among older riders—continue to rise as overall traffic fatalities decrease. The trend alarms safety officials as August and September are historically high in motorcyclist deaths, and the annual Sturgis event, especially popular with older riders, begins this week.

In 2005, more than 10 percent of the 559 traffic fatalities were motorcyclists, yet they represented less than 4 percent of registered vehicles. Nearly 60 percent of those motorcycle fatalities were riders age 35–54. Underscoring the rising prevalence of older riders in fatal crashes were the four motorcyclist deaths in the last week of July—three in the Twin Cities metro and one in greater Minnesota—which involved riders ages 41, 43, 46 and 52.

“Historically, younger riders have been overrepresented and older riders underrepresented in crashes—that is reversing,” says Kathy Swanson, director of the DPS Office of Traffic Safety.

Riders ages 15–34 accounted for 22 percent of fatal crashes last year, a significant drop from 55 percent in 1996. Conversely, riders age 35–54 who made up just one-third of motorcyclist deaths a decade ago now represent nearly 60 percent of those fatalities.

The age trend of impaired riders in fatal crashes also is reversing. Four impaired riders ages 15-34 were killed in 2005 compared to 10 in 1996. Riders age 35–54 had 16 alcohol-involved fatalities last year, yet only three impaired driving deaths in 1996.

“Older riders are getting into motorcycling again, or for the first time, without changing their driving attitudes,” says Swanson. “Motorcycle riders are far more vulnerable than other vehicle drivers, and alcohol makes them much more likely to be in a crash.”

DPS advises riders to take a safety course to gain or enhance the special knowledge and skills needed for safe motorcycle operation — especially as less than one-half of owners have any training. The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center offers safety information and training for new, returning and advanced riders. For more information or to sign up for a course, call 800-407-6677 or visit [www.motorcyclesafety.state.mn.us](http://www.motorcyclesafety.state.mn.us).

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