



NEWS RELEASE

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WILD HOGS RAISES THE CURTAIN ON OLDER BIKER SAFETY ISSUE

Art Reflects Reality as Aging Boomers Return to Motorcycles — and Crash

ST. PAUL — Public safety officials say the new film, “Wild Hogs,” accurately reflects the dramatic increase in the popularity of motorcycling among older men. But the experts warn that the silver-screen treatment overlooks rider training and the true life-and-death crash statistics of older motorcyclists being played out on roads across Minnesota and the nation.

The film, which opened this past weekend as box-office leader, features Tim Allen, John Travolta, Martin Lawrence and William H. Macy as a “group of middle-aged friends who decide to rev up their routine suburban lives with a freewheeling motorcycle group.”

“The filmmakers have it right—boomers are returning to riding big-time,” says Kathy Swanson, director of the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). “Older riders are getting into motorcycling again, or for the first time, without changing their driving attitudes or seeking safety training — and that’s resulting in increased deaths.”

According to OTS, motorcyclist deaths—especially among older riders—continue to rise as overall traffic fatalities decrease. In 2006, motorcycles represented about 3 percent of registered vehicles in Minnesota, yet motorcyclists accounted for 12 percent of the total 486 traffic deaths. And nearly 60 percent of those motorcycle fatalities were riders age 35-54.

Swanson adds that in addition to wearing protective gear such a helmet, jacket, boots and gloves, the most important step a new or returning biker can do is take training courses. The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center offers rider training courses across the state April through October; training information can be accessed at the Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center Web site at www.motorcyclesafety.state.mn.us or by calling 1-800-407-6677.

Last week, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Mary Peters called for more training among riders and cited that the crash rate among motorcyclists in the 50-plus age group has increased by more than 400 percent in the last decade. Nationally, motorcycle fatalities have more than doubled in the last 10 years and now account for more than 4,500 deaths and 78,000 injuries annually.

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