



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2007

CONTACT:

Dennis Smith, 651-201-7569

MOTORCYCLISTS RETURN WITH BACKDROP OF DEATHS DOUBLING SINCE 2000

New Maps Show 2004–2006 Fatal and Serious Injury Crashes Across State Regions

ST. PAUL — With spring's warm weather reclaiming Minnesota, motorcyclists are returning to the roads in record numbers across the state. However, the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) strongly cautions motorcycle operators to have proper training, obey traffic laws, and wear protective gear because they are overrepresented in the state's traffic deaths.

Last year motorcycles represented 4 percent of registered vehicles in the state, but the 71 motorcyclist deaths comprised 14 percent of the state's 494 traffic fatalities in 2006. By comparison, the 35 motorcyclists' deaths in 2000 were less than 6 percent of the total 625 traffic fatalities. There have been two motorcycle crash fatalities to-date in 2007.

Motorcyclist deaths have risen as Minnesota traffic fatalities overall have decreased. Much of the increase is associated with deaths among older riders. In 2006, riders ages 35–54 represented 44 percent of motorcyclist fatalities compared to just one-third of those deaths in 1996.

Recently produced maps show the locations of fatal and serious-injury motorcycle crashes during 2004–2006. The maps, produced by the Minnesota departments of Public Safety and Transportation, show the crashes by region: Twin Cities' metro area, southeast, southwest, west, central, northwest and northeast Minnesota. The vast majority of crashes occurred on weekends between noon and 9 p.m., and many were on roads other than interstate, U.S. highways or state highways.

“While quiet and nice for sight-seeing, county and rural roads can lead riders into a dangerous and false sense of security,” says Katherine Burke Moore, OTS deputy director. “There are more curves, animal crossings, poor sightlines, and less space to correct for distraction and speeding. Road-handling training goes a long way on these types of roads.”

DPS advises riders to take a safety course to gain or improve knowledge and skills needed for safe operation. The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center offers training for new, returning and advanced riders. For more information, call 800-407-6677 or visit www.motorcyclesafety.state.mn.us.

Driving Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths

Editor's Note: The maps may be accessed for viewing or download at www.dps.state.mn.us/ots or by contacting Dennis Smith, dennis.smith@state.mn.us or 651-201-7569.

Alcohol
and Gambling
Enforcement

ARMER/911
Program

Bureau of
Criminal
Apprehension

Driver
and Vehicle
Services

Homeland
Security and
Emergency
Management

Minnesota
State Patrol

Office of
Communications

Office of
Justice Programs

Office of
Traffic Safety

State Fire Marshal
and
Pipeline Safety