



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MOTORCYCLIST DEATHS UP, PASS 20-DEATH MARK FOR YEAR

ST. PAUL — At least 22 motorcyclists have been killed on Minnesota roads to-date in 2011, according to preliminary reports from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Traffic Safety.

The 22 deaths reflect a nearly 30 percent increase in deaths compared to 17 at this time in 2010. Last year there was a total of 45 rider deaths, a 15 percent drop from 53 in 2009. In 2008, the 74 deaths marked a 24-year high in riders killed. Riders ages 40–64 accounted for 64 percent of deaths in 2010.

“A big concern is that August and September are typically high-traffic and high-fatal months for riders,” says Bill Shaffer, DPS Office of Traffic Safety motorcycle program coordinator. “Riders and motorists need to share the road and be watchful of each other.”

22 Deaths Breakdown:

- By month: April (1); May (5); June (7); July (9, including 4 during July 20–21).
- 20 were motorcycle operators (19 males, one female); two were passengers (both female).
- Five victims were wearing helmets (status of helmet use was reported only in 16 of the 22 deaths).
- 18 were age 40 or older; age range of all fatalities was 26 to 85.
- 13 fatal crashes occurred outside the seven-county metro area. Multiple deaths by county: Crow Wing, 2; Dakota, 2; Hennepin, 2; Nicollet, 2; Scott, 3; and, Washington, 2. One death occurred each in Carlton, Dodge, Houston, Itasca, Le Sueur, Mille Lacs, Olmsted, Rice and Winona.

Shaffer adds that the issue is underscored by the fact that there are more motorcycles on the road than ever — there are more than 229,000 registered bikes in Minnesota.

Rider and Motorist Safety Tips:

- Motorists are advised to watch carefully for motorcycles in traffic, and always look twice before turning or changing lanes.
- Riders are advised to wear protective gear, travel at safe speeds, pay attention and ride sober. DPS advises that riders seek safety training at www.motorcyclesafety.org, wear high-visibility riding gear and watch for deer. Two riders have died this year in crashes with deer.

Motorcycle safety efforts are components of *Toward Zero Deaths (TZD)*, the state’s primary road safety initiative that is a partnership between DPS, MnDOT, Department of Health, the University of Minnesota and others. A primary vision of *TZD* is to create a safe driving culture in Minnesota in which motorists support a goal of zero road fatalities by practicing and promoting safe and smart driving behavior. *TZD* focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes — education, enforcement, engineering and emergency trauma response.

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