

From The Beat to the Bench

May 2010

Motorcycle Awareness

The Ohio State Highway Patrol is once again promoting its motorcycle awareness program. With the onset of summer weather there is an increase in the number of motorcycles on the road. Unfortunately, this also means that there will be an increase in accidents involving motorcycles. Recently in the Sandusky area a motorcyclist was struck and killed by a motorist who apparently did not see the approaching motorcycle at an intersection.

According to the highway patrol last year there were 152 fatal motorcycle crashes and 3,290 injury crashes in Ohio. In 2008 there were 212 killed and 3,772 injured. Prior to 2009 motorcycle fatalities had increased by about 35 percent in Ohio during the previous three years.

Nationally motorcycle fatalities have increased from 2,116 in 1997 to 5,008 in 2009. The increase is at least, in part, due to motorcycle purchases of over 1 million per year during the last four years. More bikers on the road increase the chance of an accident.

Both motorcyclists and motor vehicle drivers need to consider the unique traffic safety issues that go along with the increase of motorcycles that will be on the highways in the summer.

As a motorist, here are some steps to become more aware of motorcyclists:

- * **Respect the motorcyclist:** Remember the motorcycle is a vehicle with all of the privileges of any vehicle on the roadway. Give the motorcyclist a full lane of travel.
- * **Look Out:** Look for the motorcyclist on the highway, at intersections, when a motorcyclist may be making a left turn, and when a motorcyclist may be changing lanes. Clearly signal your intentions.
- * **Anticipate a motorcyclist's maneuver:** Obstructions (debris, potholes, etc.) that you may ignore or not notice can be deadly for a motorcyclist. Predict evasive actions.
- * **Allow plenty of space:** Don't follow a motorcycle too closely. Allow enough room for the motorcyclist to take evasive actions.

Finally, 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.

To obtain a motorcycle license you 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.

We must all exercise extra caution this time of year to be aware of motorcycles especially when entering into intersections.