



New Study Supports Motorcycle Helmet Laws

Written by Administrator

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Over the past decade, Americans have greatly increased their use of motorcycles. Unfortunately, that trend has come at a great cost. Motorcycle injuries have increased by about 5,000 a year and fatal accidents have nearly doubled during that same time period. At present, motorcycle enthusiasts, medical professionals and lawmakers continue debating one another about the need for more rigid helmet laws. In fact, only 20 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia currently have mandatory helmet laws.

At the Center of the Helmet Safety Debate

There has been a longstanding debate about whether or not a helmet's weight can impose such a strong rotational force or "torque" on a cyclist's neck that it might be safer to ride without a helmet. That argument was based on a study more than two decades old. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) now seriously questions that earlier study's statistics. Furthermore, today's motorcycle helmets have changed so dramatically that the earlier study's claims now have little merit. Modern motorcycle helmets are far lighter than those marketed even a decade ago and they provide today's riders with much stronger protection.

Merits of the New *Journal* Study

Researchers can now show that those who ride and wear helmets *not only* lower their chances of incurring TBIs, they also lower their risks of suffering cervical (spinal neck area) injuries. Published in the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*, this new study shows that those who wear helmets suffer *22% fewer cervical spine injuries* than those who fail to

wear helmets. This study, led by Adil H. Haider, M.D., M.P.H., an assistant professor of surgery at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, reviewed the motorcycle collision data for more than 40,000 accidents that occurred between 2002 and 2006. Like previous studies, this new one confirms that motorcyclists who wear helmets reduce their risks of traumatic brain injuries by 65% and lower their chances of dying in an accident by about 37 per cent.

Legislative Challenges Remain Steep

Even though there's mounting medical proof supporting mandatory motorcycle helmet laws, many legislatures either ignore all of the new data or appear to be favoring special interests groups. During the past 15 years, a few states (Pennsylvania, Texas and Florida) have even repealed their mandatory helmet laws. Apart from the importance of saving human lives and minimizing injuries, other related issues require attention.

Given the ongoing uproar about rising medical expenses, it's surprising that more states aren't determined to rein them in further by limiting the number of these costly accidents by requiring motorcycle riders to wear helmets.

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