

California Focuses on Motorcycle Awareness

In California, the month of May was declared Motorcycle Awareness Month. As part of the program, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) posted signs along many major roadways alerting motorists that they need to share the road with motorcyclists. Though the CHP program concluded in May, motorcycle awareness is important at all times to increase safety and reduce accidents.

Motorcycles are always at a disadvantage in an accident with a passenger vehicle, due to the fact that a bike offers little to no protection to the rider other than maneuverability and the ability to take quick evasive action.

In California, there were 396 fatalities in 2009 out of 11,488 motorcycle-related accidents, with 383 deaths being the biker or passenger. This is a decline in [fatal motorcycle accidents](#) from 2008 when 553 people were killed; of which 529 were those on motorcycles.

The chance of a biker being injured in any kind of crash is about 80 percent, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). For motorists in passenger cars, the rate is only 20 percent.

Seeing Motorcycles Can Save Lives

Awareness of motorcycles on the roadway by motorists is essential if fatalities and accident rates are to continue to decline. Since the majority of accidents occur at intersections and when motorists are making left turns, drivers need to be on the lookout for motorcycles. Bikes are smaller and motorists often misjudge distance and speed, if they see them at all.

Riders can increase their safety by taking strong measures to ensure they will have a safe ride. The CHP and biker advocacy groups encourage all novice riders to take the California Motorcyclist Safety Program course before riding. Experienced riders can also take a more comprehensive course to improve their skills and knowledge. These courses teach riders how to maneuver, corner, stop and deal with adverse road conditions. There are more than 120 training sites in the state.

All riders should wear appropriate clothing to minimize the risk of severe skin burns and scarring. Full helmets, leather boots and gloves should be worn on every ride. Motorcyclists should also avoid riding in inclement weather or at night, if possible, unless they ride in a group.

When approaching an intersection, a biker should be especially cautious and assume that motorists will turn in front of them. A tire and valve inspection before riding can avoid blowouts and loss of control, as well as locate leaking valves that could result in a fire from a spark.

Finally, [motorcycle accidents](#) can be prevented by everyone slowing down, using common sense, and knowing that all types of vehicles are sharing the road.