

Motorcycle Fatalities Decrease

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) released a report today on motorcycle fatalities. The report claims that motorcycle fatalities are down 16 percent for the first 3 quarters of 2009 and about 10 percent for the year. This is the first significant decrease in over a decade.

The decrease in fatalities is not a function of people riding less. Vehicle miles traveled for motorcycles is down one to two percent (the number varies regionally). Miles traveled have also increased in some areas where people are swapping gas guzzler cars for small, efficient motorcycles in order to stretch their pennies as far as possible. After all, motorcycles are the single most affordable form of private transportation available to Americans.

In fact, the only addition to motorcycle safety on a national level is the motorcycle safety grant program signed into law in 2005. The program, the brain child of the Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF), sends federal highway dollars back to the States earmarked for rider education programs and motorcycle awareness campaigns. It is of course the good work done on a state by state basis, largely by motorcyclists, that ultimately deserves credit for this reduction in loss of life.

With the increasing numbers of new and returning riders, and concern over single vehicle motorcycle crashes, rider education and training is the only proactive measure that can truly assist motorcyclists in preventing crashes. Studies have indicated that more than 90% of accident involved riders were without formal training.

The next question is - how do you maintain the reduction? Helmet law proponents will use this as a stepping stone to put a mandatory helmet law in place. They will point to the law as the logical next step, which it is not. We were able to achieve this reduction without a national helmet law and we can continue the trend without it. Keeping the numbers down will only be possible through quality rider education and motorist/motorcycle awareness campaigns. And of course continue the MRF's position; focus on crash avoidance and not simply safer crashing and we will save lives.

Read the full report here: <http://www.ghsa.org/html/publications/spotlight/index.html>