

Iowa Motorcycle Crash Facts

In the past six years, overall traffic fatalities in Iowa have declined, yet motorcycle fatalities have not.

Iowa's annual motorcycle crashes are part of an alarming nationwide increase resulting in:

4,502 deaths
82,000 injuries

Iowa Motorcycle Crash Facts

Iowa motorcyclists are six times more likely to be injured than other motorists involved in crashes – based on miles driven.

An average of more than 50 motorcyclists die from motorcycle crashes in Iowa each year.

Nine of 10 Iowa motorcycle fatality victims were not wearing a safety helmet.

Motorcyclist crash involvement is highest in Iowa riders aged 45 and older.

In Iowa, 60 percent of riders killed were aged 45 and older.

Only one of two fatal motorcycle crashes involves another vehicle . . . the motorcyclist usually fails to maintain control of the motorcycle.

More than 50 percent of motorcycle-vehicle crashes occurred because a driver did not see the motorcycle.

More Information

For more information about the Iowa DOT's motorcycle safety program

visit: www.iowadot.gov/mvd/ods/motorcycle

or contact: Toni Kerkove, program facilitator, at toni.kerkove@dot.iowa.gov | 641-423-1675



This brochure was developed in conjunction with the Iowa Department of Public Safety and Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau.

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Stay Alert



Stay Alive

Sharing the Road

Safety Tips for Motorists and Motorcyclists



Iowa Department
of Transportation

Safety and Risk

Motorcycles and other vehicles sharing the road

Motorists have trouble noticing and reacting to motorcycles.

Motorists usually look for larger vehicles, not motorcycles.

Motorists often miss seeing or misjudge speeds of approaching motorcycles because of their size.

Motorcycle operators have little crash protection.

Motorcycles are small, less stable, and maneuver differently than other motor vehicles.

Motorcyclists can be at greater risk because of their inexperience, age or high risk behaviors, such as impaired driving and speeding.

Motorcyclists are more at risk if they are not wearing proper riding gear. This includes safety helmet, eye protection, long sleeves, gloves, long pants and boots.



Motorcycle Tips Ride Bright

Make yourself visible – be seen

Use a modulating headlamp. Choose riding gear that increases your visibility in traffic and provides protection in a crash. Use bright colors and retroreflective strips or decals, especially at night.

Ride so you are seen

Recognize it is difficult for motorists to judge how fast a motorcycle is going; blind spots around cars and trucks also prevent motorcyclists from being seen.

Sharpen your riding skills – be smart

Know your abilities and ride within your limits. Earn and maintain your motorcycle license. A motorcycle rider refresher course can upgrade your skills and increase your riding enjoyment.

Allow plenty of space

Allow space for motorists to see and react to you. Scan for changing traffic and roadway conditions. Allow space for emergency braking or crash avoidance.

Signal your intentions

Signal before changing lanes. Avoid weaving between lanes. Flash your brake light when you are slowing down and before stopping.

Know your bike

Be familiar with your motorcycle and how to handle it in adverse conditions, especially on gravel.

Motorist Tips Drive Safe

Look for motorcycles

Modulating motorcycle headlamps are legal and help make motorcycles more visible. Watch out at intersections and when making left turns. Motorcycles are everywhere . . . look twice and save a life.

Respect the motorcyclist

Motorcycles are vehicles with the same privileges as any vehicle on the roadway. Give the motorcyclist a full lane of travel.

Left turns

The most common crash type that occurs between a car/truck and motorcycle is the one that happens at an intersection as the motorist is making a left turn in front of a motorcycle.

Allow plenty of space

Wind gusts, both natural and those created by large passing vehicles, can move a motorcycle across an entire lane if the rider is not prepared; rain can make the road slippery; the blinding effect of a vehicle's high beams can be dangerous; and hazards like dead and live animals and damage to the roadway can cause an erratic movement by the motorcyclist.

Give your full attention to the driving task

Remain alert for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and at intersections.

Related Factors

Factors affecting motorcycle riders

Left-turning motorists and drivers at stop signs often “misjudge speed” or “don’t see” an approaching motorcycle.

Speed is reported as a contributing factor in more than one-third of Iowa’s fatal motorcycle crashes.

Motorcycle operators in fatal crashes had higher intoxication rates than any other type of driver. Over one-third of motorcycle operators in fatal crashes tested positive for alcohol or drugs.

Seven in 10 of Iowa’s licensed riders are aged 45 or older, compared to only 3 in 10 just 10 years ago.

Motorcyclists die in deer-related crashes nearly every year.

