

Motorcycle deaths headed for seven year high

With 26 motorcycle fatalities on record so far this year and at least two more months of the motorcycle season remaining, the OPP is concerned that 2014 motorcycle deaths could reach a seven-year high.

As of August 18, 2014, 25 motorcyclists and one passenger have died in motorcycle crashes within OPP jurisdiction this year. The high number has prompted the OPP to share some facts and dispel some myths relating to the fatal motorcycle collisions it investigates in an effort to raise awareness about motorcycle safety.

Earlier this month, OPP Aircraft Enforcement Patrol (AEP) clocked a motorcyclist travelling at 210 kilometres per hour, charging him under Ontario's stunt driving law. The AEP airplane conducts patrol throughout the province and is highly effective at spotting motorcycles and other vehicles travelling at high rates of speed.

Other than a careless few that we come across during our enforcement operations, the OPP believes that Ontario motorcyclists in general recognize that they are a vulnerable road user and demonstrate safe, defensive driving. We are relying on motorcyclists and the motoring public to work with us and join in our efforts to keep motorcycling safe. The solution is simple: ride and drive within the law," said OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, Provincial Commander, Traffic Safety and Operational Support.

The following data reflect motorcycle fatalities within OPP jurisdiction:

Myth: Young, inexperienced motorcyclists are the most vulnerable, at-risk riders and account for the largest number of victims who die in motorcycle crashes in Ontario.

Fact: From 2008 to 2014 (as of August 18), only 16 of the 175 motorcyclists who have died on Ontario roads were under the age of 25. The age group with the highest rate of fatality is the 45-54 year group, which comprises 48 of the 175 victims. The second highest age group is the 55-64 year group, with 39 victims in that category. Combined, these two age groups account for almost half of the fatalities (87).

Myth: Those who die in motorcycle crashes are doing something wrong at the time of the incident. Like other drivers, motorcyclists can avoid crashes if they drive properly and within the law.

Fact: Between 2008 and 2014, for 50 of the 175 motorcycle victims, the driver of the motorcycle was driving properly at the time. Far too often, the actions of another driver are a causal factor in motorcycle crashes. Motorcycles are much harder to see than other vehicles. As a rider, it is important to wear high visibility equipment and put yourself in the proper lane positioning to increase your chances of being seen by other motorists. As a motorist sharing the road with motorcyclists, you need to maintain a keen awareness of your surroundings and always be on watch for motorcycles, especially in blind spots before changing lanes.

Myth: Motorcyclists are at far greater risk of crashing when riding on wet roads.

Fact: While true that riding on wet roads places an additional risk on riders, 158 of the 175 motorcyclists who have died between 2008 and 2014 (to date) were riding on dry roads.

Other facts relating to the 175 OPP-investigated motorcycle fatalities from 2008 to 2014 (as of August 18):

168 of the victims were the driver, seven were passengers.

156 of the victims were men, 19 were women.

Top contributing factors (on the part of the motorcyclist and/or other driver(s) involved in the collision):

Speed: Factor in 43 of the deaths.

Lost Control: Factor in 29 of the deaths.

Alcohol: Factor in 21 of the deaths.

Fail to Yield: Factor in 20 of the deaths.

Inattention: Factor in 18 of the deaths.