



# ALL-RIDER MOTORCYCLE HELMET LAWS

*Helmets Save Lives and Prevent Brain Injuries*

**30 States  
Need All-  
Rider  
Helmet Laws**

In 2005, 4,553 motorcycle riders were killed, a 13% increase from 2004 and a 115% increase from 1997. This is the eighth year in a row motorcycle fatalities have increased and the highest number of deaths since 1986. While some of this increase is attributed to the rise in popularity of motorcycling, studies from NHTSA show that fatality rates are exceeding increases in vehicle miles traveled and motorcycle registrations. Motorcycles make up less than 2% of all registered vehicles and only 0.4% of all vehicle miles traveled, but motorcyclists account for almost 11% of total traffic fatalities. A 2004 Lou Harris Poll showed that eight of ten people believe their state should have an all-rider helmet law. Despite this fact, several states continue to attempt to repeal their all-rider helmet law, while virtually no state is working toward adopting a new one.

Helmet use is the most effective measure to protect motorcyclists in a crash. In states with all-rider helmet laws, use is nearly 100%. While helmets will not prevent crashes from occurring, they have a significant, positive impact on preventing head and brain injuries during crashes. Critics of helmet laws cite motorcycle education programs as the answer, but the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and other research show no evidence that motorcycle rider training reduces crash risk.

According to NHTSA, almost 50 percent of motorcycle crash victims have no private health insurance so their medical bills are often paid by taxpayers. As states have repealed their helmet laws, helmet use has declined from 71 percent to 58 percent nationally, with deaths and traumatic brain injuries on the rise. In 1992, California's all-rider law went into effect resulting in a 40 percent drop in its Medicaid costs and total hospital charges for treatment of motorcycle riders.

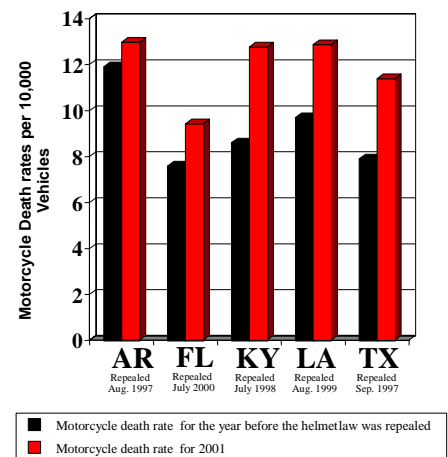
According to NHTSA, an estimated \$13.2 billion was saved from 1984 to 1999 because of motorcycle helmet use. An additional \$11.1 billion could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn helmets.

Today, only 20 states and DC require all motorcycle riders to wear a helmet. 26 states have laws that cover only some riders (i.e., up to age 18 or 21). These age-specific laws are nearly impossible for police officers to enforce and result in much lower helmet use. Four states (CO, IL, IA and NH) have no motorcycle helmet use law. About two-thirds (65%) of the fatally injured motorcycle riders were not wearing a helmet in states without all-rider helmet laws compared to 14% in states with them.

In 2004, Louisiana reinstated its all-rider helmet law after seeing a 100 percent increase in motorcycle fatalities and a 50 percent drop in helmet usage since repealing its all-rider law in 1999.

## MOTORCYCLE DEATH RATES

in  
5 STATES BEFORE AND AFTER HELMET LAW REPEALS



Source: Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 1996 -2001.

## TOP REASONS WHY EVERY STATE SHOULD PASS AN ALL-RIDER MOTORCYCLE HELMET LAW

### 1. HELMET LAWS SAVE LIVES

Death rates from head injuries are twice as high among motorcyclists in states without all-rider helmet laws. Motorcycle helmets are 37 percent effective in preventing motorcyclist deaths and 67 percent effective in preventing brain injuries.

### 2. HELMET LAWS INCREASE USE

Studies show that helmet use approaches 100% in states with all-rider motorcycle helmet laws. In states without all-rider laws, helmet use was 53% in 2002 and only 46% in 2005. Age-specific helmet laws are virtually impossible to enforce and there is no evidence that these laws reduce deaths and injuries.

### 3. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Un-helmeted riders have higher health care costs as a result of their crash injuries and nearly half lack private insurance. The financial burden for treatment and care of uninsured motorcycle crash victims is placed on the government and taxpayers. In 2005, Maryland estimated that a repeal of its all-rider helmet law would increase Medicaid expenditures by \$1.2 million in the first year and annually up to \$1.5 million thereafter.

### 4. FATALITIES AND INJURIES ARE CLIMBING

In 2005, 4,553 motorcycle riders died in crashes. Motorcycle fatalities are at their highest level in 20 years, and now account for over 10% of all annual fatalities, even though motorcycles make up less than 2% of all registered vehicles and only 0.4% of all vehicle miles traveled.

### 5. THE PUBLIC OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTS HELMET LAWS

According to a motor vehicle occupant survey conducted by NHTSA, 81 percent reported that they favored mandatory helmet use laws for motorcyclists. A 2004 Lou Harris poll commissioned by Advocates yielded the same results.

### 6. ALTERNATIVES ARE COSTLY AND INEFFECTIVE

There is no scientific evidence that motorcycle rider training reduces crash risk and is an adequate substitute for an all-rider helmet law. A review conducted in 1996 by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation concluded that there is "no compelling evidence that rider training is associated with reductions in collisions." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also supports these claims. If elimination of risk exposure is not possible, then risk management, in the form of a universal helmet law, is the next best option.

### 7. HELMETS DO NOT INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF SPINAL INJURY OR CRASH

Critics of helmet laws often cite a highly disputed study by J.P. Goldstein indicating the added weight of helmets cause neck and spinal injuries during crashes. More than a dozen peer-reviewed medical studies have refuted this claim. A study reported in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* in 1994 analyzed 1,153 motorcycle crashes in four states and determined that helmets reduce head injuries without an increased occurrence of spinal injuries in motorcycle trauma. Studies also show that helmets do not restrict vision, interfere with hearing, or cause heat discomfort.

*(Sources: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration(NHTSA), Fatal Analysis Reporting System, 2005; Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)*

