

# MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

## ***I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW***

Effective January 1, 1992, everyone riding a motorcycle in California is required to wear a helmet that meets established federal safety standards. Although there have been several attempts to have the law amended or repealed, attempts have not succeeded, due in part to data provided by the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) reflecting information before and after implementation of the helmet law.

In 2000, motorcycle fatalities represented only 7.3 percent of total traffic fatalities. In 2008, motorcycle fatalities jumped to 16.3 percent of California's total traffic fatalities, while motorcycle registrations increased 7 percent from 772,524 in 2007 to 824,244 in 2008.

Motorcyclist injuries, as a percentage of total traffic injuries, have also been rising, from 2.6 percent in 2000 to 4.8 percent in 2008. More alarming than the relative percent of motorcycle fatalities and injuries is the increase in the actual number of motorcyclists killed, from 275 in 2000 to 433 in 2006 and 560 in 2008.

In 2008, the under age 20 age group had the largest increase in motorcycle fatalities (up 57 percent from 13 in 2007 to 30 in 2008 with the second highest increase seen in the over age 59 age group which increased 44 percent from 32 in 2007 to 57 in 2008).

Of the 560 motorcyclists killed, at least 12 percent (68) were un-helmeted. Since helmets are about 39 percent effective in preventing fatalities, NHTSA estimates that 26 of the 68 un-helmeted motorcyclists killed would have survived had they worn a helmet.

Super sport motorcycles, defined as consumer versions of the motorcycles used by factory racing teams, account for 14 percent of the registered motorcycles in California, yet the 211 super sport drivers and passengers killed in 2008 accounted for 38 percent of the 560 motorcyclists killed in California.

## ***II. ACTION PLANS***

OTS is currently a member of the California Motorcyclists Safety Program Advisory Committee chaired by CHP. The committee acts in an advisory capacity for the California Motorcyclists Safety Program which is a statewide motorcycle training program. The program is funded by student training fees and \$2 from each motorcycle registration fee in the state. During 2008, 70,469 motorcyclists were trained through the program, a 12 percent increase from 2007.

In September 2008, the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), in conjunction with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), conducted California's first Motorcycle Safety Assessment. This evaluation provided OTS an outside review of California's motorcycle safety program(s). NHTSA provided a nationally recognized team of experts to evaluate current status and provide recommendations for improvements/enhancements on programs related to motorcycles and motorcycle safety. Recommendations related to enforcement and public awareness are being incorporated into grants to local law enforcement agencies and the California Highway Patrol.

OTS will fund public awareness efforts through AL and PT grants. These grants include outreach at a variety of motorcycle events ranging from Harley-Davidson oriented charity rides to MotoGP racing events. Activities include booths providing information about training, protective gear, and safe and sober riding. OTS funded an exhibit trailer housing two motorcycles that were involved in fatal crashes. The trailer will be displayed as means to raise awareness among motorcyclists and other drivers about need to share the road and to ride and drive safe and sober.

Also funded through AL and PT grants, law enforcement will target DUI, speed, red light running and intersection violations incorporating special operations to reduce motorcycle-involved collisions. These operations will be accompanied by earned-media efforts that will inform the public of the rising number of fatal and injury motorcycle crashes.\*

In 2008, 37 percent of all motorcyclists killed were not properly licensed. In order to determine whether proper licensing will reduce fatal motorcycle collisions, OTS will fund a TR grant to the Department of Motor Vehicles. The project will identify registered motorcycle owners that do not have motorcycle license endorsements. A randomly assigned sample of the unlicensed registered owners will receive an intervention letter highlighting the legal consequences of riding without proper endorsements. Subsequent licensing, crash, and traffic violation rates will be tracked and compared between those who received the letter, those who did not, and the general motorcyclist population.

In order to deliver motorcycle safety messages and interventions to the appropriate groups most in need of specific outreach efforts, OTS is working with NHTSA, the California Department of Motor Vehicles and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety to analyze crash data and registration information to identify such groups and opportunities for improvement.

### ***III. TASKS***

#### ***TASK 1 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION***

This task provides for the necessary staff time and expenses incurred by OTS that are directly related to the planning, development, coordination, monitoring, auditing, and evaluation of grants within this program area, and the preparation of the 2009 Highway Safety Plan. Assistance is also provided under this task to individuals to attend and participate in committees, training sessions, or educational meetings or conferences.

## **TASK 2 - MOTORCYCLE PROGRAM ANALYSIS**

This task provides for comprehensive evaluation of motorcycle programs in order to improve and develop effective countermeasures to reach the increasing population of motorcyclists.

### **2010/402**

#### **MC1001 -- CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL**

##### **LOOK TWICE, SAVE A LIFE**

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) will implement a 24-month traffic safety grant focusing on reducing motorcyclist fatalities and injuries throughout the four counties with the highest statistics, within CHP jurisdictions. The targeted counties are Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, and San Bernardino. This will be accomplished by enhanced enforcement, including aerial support; and public education campaigns to increase drivers' awareness of sharing the road with motorcyclists as well as to bolster public knowledge of the California Motorcycle Safety Program's availability to motorcyclists. (\$612,376/\$212,833)

#### **IV. \*NOTE**

OTS has allocated Section 410 and 164 funds in 35 *DUI Grants Made Easy Grants* (pages 10-AL-4 & 5); Section 402 funds in 25 *Selected Traffic Enforcement Program Grants Made Easy Grants* (pages 10-PT-3 & 4); and Section 164AL funds in 4 *Vehicle Impound Program Grants Made Easy Grants* (pages 10-PT-7). The cities conducting motorcycle enforcement are asterisked in Task 2 of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Section and Police Traffic Services Section.