

Governor's Office of Highway Safety

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MAY IS MOTORCYCLE SAFETY MONTH **REPORT: Georgia Motorcycle Deaths Down..**

But Safety Advocates Plan Against Rebound in Fatalities

(STATEWIDE GEORGIA) May is "Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month" and a national highway safety report released today shows that for the first time in eleven years, American motorcycle fatalities declined by at least ten-percent in 2009. The new report from the Washington-based Governors Highway Safety Association projects motorcycle fatalities across the nation declined from 5,290 in 2008... to 4,762 in 2009.

Although their data is preliminary, GHSA is projecting reductions in motorcycle fatalities in approximately three-fourths of the states, including Georgia, where the state has been locked in a relentless ten-year climb of steady increases in motorcyclist deaths. Now, based on research from the first nine months of 2009, Georgia motorcycle fatalities are actually predicted to decline by 30-percent, marking the first time the decade-long death grip has loosened on this state's motorcycle stats as well.

The report leads some experts to attribute the notable national trend to fewer beginner bikers, fewer motorcycles sold, and fewer motorcycle miles traveled... all due to the economy. Add to these factors fewer leisure riders due to bad weather and shorter cycling seasons and the foreseeable end of the recent trend of inexperienced baby boomers buying big bikes.

For Georgia's Highway Safety Team news of decreasing fatal crashes was long overdue. "Any motorcycle death is unacceptable. You can't imagine the frustration of seeing ten years of escalating motorcycle fatalities while every other crash category we tackled was on the decline," said Director Bob Dallas of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. Dallas is a motorcycle rider and has led statewide motorcycle rides to increase safety awareness among all roadway users.

But in Georgia it was definitely about more than economic factors. "Until now, whether motorcycle registrations went up or down, the annual fatality counts continued to grow," said GOHS Director Dallas. "That's why we have continued to focus on motorcycle safety and education and enforcement programs as a highway safety priority. We want to be certain this isn't an anomaly." GOHS has partnered with motorcycle advocacy groups, motorcycle retailers, the Department of Driver Services, and the Georgia State Patrol to promote highway safety issues affecting Georgia motorcyclists and to develop comprehensive statewide education and enforcement programs like '**Share the Road**'.

Georgia's highway safety planners will continue to strategize with motorcycle safety advocates to create long-term lifesaving campaigns for more motorcycle education and better public awareness. They know that nationally, more than 50-percent of all motorcycle fatalities are single vehicle crashes... That 30-percent of motorcycle deaths involve riders with illegal alcohol levels... And that more than 66-percent of car-motorcycle crashes are caused by drivers of *other* motor vehicles, *not by motorcyclists*.

"The previous ten years of motorcycle fatality data painted a grim picture for Georgia riders. The more motorcycles on our highways, the more popular riding has become, the higher the Georgia motorcycle death toll has risen," said Director Bob Dallas.

"In 2008, 12-percent of people killed in motor vehicle crashes here were motorcycle drivers. Before that, Georgia motorcycle fatalities increased by 59-percent during the period from 2004 to 2008 alone. We want to see it stopped," said Director Dallas. "We hope that once all the new numbers come in, 2010 will also show a much-needed decrease in motorcycle fatalities. We want to take Georgia's motorcyclists off the endangered species list."

Both new and experienced motorcyclists are encouraged to enroll in the "Real Riding - Real Skills" courses offered by the Georgia Motorcycle Safety Program through the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS). "It's important both for legal and safety purposes that every rider has a motorcycle endorsement on their driver's license and that motorcycles are also properly registered and licensed. Together we encourage all Georgia drivers to be cautious and observe these smaller vehicles as they hit the road this spring," said Director Dallas. "**Look Twice. Save a Life! Motorcycles Are Everywhere!**"

For more information contact GOHS Motorcycle Safety Program Planner, Fred Huff at 404-656-6996.

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