

NEW YORK STATE HIGHWAY SAFETY STRATEGIC PLAN FFY 2012

Full document

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MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

OVERVIEW

The popularity of motorcycles continues to grow as evidenced by the consistent upward trend in both motorcycle licenses and registrations over the past decade. Since 2001, the number of drivers with motorcycle licenses has increased by 24%, reaching over 665,500 in 2010. During this same time period, the number of registered motorcycles has also been on a consistent upward trend with the number increasing 56% to over 340,000. Unlike motorcycle licenses and registrations, motorcycle fatal crashes have not followed a consistent pattern over the past ten years. Between 2009 and 2010, fatal crashes rose from 152 to 180. The increase that occurred in 2010 was comparable to the decrease in fatal crashes between 2008 and 2009. Because of the concern over the vulnerability of motorcyclists who are sharing the road with much larger vehicles, New York State has developed and implemented a program that takes a comprehensive approach to encouraging and promoting motorcycle safety. One of the key components of the program is public awareness efforts that address both motorcyclists and other motorists. In FFY 2011, motorcycle safety awareness was promoted through a number of channels and at a number of events. The NYSDOT agreed to increase the use of the “Watch for Motorcycles” slogan on the agency’s variable message signs (VMS) and to station the signs on high crash corridors. In addition, magnetic signs with the “Watch for Motorcycles” message continued to be distributed for posting on the back of large trucks. Bumper stickers, kickstand pads and key chains with motorcycle safety messages continue to be very popular with the public and more will be distributed at outreach events later in the year. A major component of New York’s comprehensive approach to address and improve motorcycle safety in the state is the Motorcycle Safety Program (MSP) administered by the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). In existence since 1996, the MSP provides instruction and field training to improve the riding skills of motorcyclists. In June 2009, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) was awarded a contract to deliver the MSP. While the number of course enrollments did not grow in 2009 due to the transition to a new contractor, the MSF program is fully operational as of 2010; the MSP is now being delivered at a total of 44 sites statewide, compared to 23 sites in 2009. A total of 16,000 students were enrolled in the training program in 2010, approaching the level reached in 2008. The Motorcycle Safety Program Technical Assessment Advisory Group continues to respond to the New York State motorcycle safety program technical assessment performed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 2008. The technical assessment included a comprehensive overview of the Motorcycle Safety Program as it existed in 2008. It provided recommendations to

strengthen areas relating to program management, personal protective gear, operator licensing, rider education and training, operating under the influence of alcohol and drugs, legislation and regulations, law enforcement, highway engineering and rider conspicuity and motorist awareness programs. While many of the recommendations have already been addressed, there is a need to monitor progress, evaluate efforts and address remaining issues. The Advisory Group's agenda is to review the recent changes in the MSP, prioritize the remaining technical assessment recommendations and discuss any additional motorcycle safety issues. The Advisory Group will continue to meet periodically during FFY 2012.

The law enforcement training initiative undertaken in 2009 continued in FFY 2011. The New York State Police and the Law Enforcement Liaisons from the NYS Association of Chiefs of Police and the NYS Sheriffs' Association with assistance from GTSC and DMV's MSP presented regional motorcycle safety training programs for law enforcement officers. The hands-on instruction provided officers, especially those assigned to patrol duties, with the knowledge and skills to educate motorcyclists and the public on motorcycle safety and to enhance enforcement efforts in New York State.

The MSP and GTSC will continue to encourage seasoned motorcyclists to pursue periodic refresher training. The "Learning is for Life" campaign focuses on experienced riders whose skills need sharpening, experienced riders who are transitioning to a larger motorcycle and riders who are returning to motorcycling after a period of time. Experienced riders represent a significant proportion of the licensed motorcyclists in New York State.

In the coming year, the GTSC will continue to coordinate, support and administer enforcement initiatives and education and awareness programs that are key components of New York's comprehensive motorcycle safety program. These initiatives augment the MSP and enhance New York's efforts to reduce motorcycle crashes, fatalities and injuries.

REVIEW OF DATA

One of the core outcome measures for tracking the performance of New York's motorcycle safety program is motorcyclist fatalities. Based on FARS data, the number of motorcyclists killed in crashes has fluctuated up and down over the five-year period 2005-2009. Between 2008 and 2009, there was a 16% decrease from 184 to 155. This measure cannot be updated at this time due to the delay in the availability of 2010 FARS data.

Analyses of data from New York's AIS were also conducted. Based on the 2010 preliminary data, the number of fatal crashes involving motorcycles continued to fluctuate. In 2010, the number of fatal crashes increased to 180 after decreasing from 184 in 2008 to 152 in 2009.

Motorcycle fatal crashes accounted for 16% of all fatal crashes in 2010, up from 14% in 2009 and comparable to the proportion in 2008. Motorcyclist fatalities (operators and passengers) followed a similar pattern increasing from 151 in 2009 to 183 in 2010, a level comparable to 2008.

Both the number of motorcycle crashes involving personal injuries and the number of motorcyclists injured followed patterns similar to that of fatal crashes. As a result of the increase in injury crashes and injuries between 2009 and 2010, both measures returned to levels comparable to those in 2008.

Over the five-year period, 2006-2010, motorcycle injury crashes consistently accounted for 3%-4% of all injury crashes.

The second core outcome measure used in monitoring motorcycle safety is the number of motorcyclists who died and were not wearing a helmet. Based on FARS data, the number of unhelmeted motorcyclist fatalities dropped to 21 in 2009 after spiking to 36 in 2008. This measure cannot be updated at this time due to the delay in the availability of 2010 FARS data.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND MEASURES

Performance Goals

- ❖ To decrease motorcyclist fatalities 10 percent from the 2007-2009 calendar year average of 169 to 152 by December 31, 2012
- ❖ To decrease unhelmeted motorcyclist fatalities 10 percent from 21 in 2009 to 19 by December 31, 2012
- ❖ To decrease the number of injured motorcyclists 8 percent from the 2008-2010 calendar base year average of 4,725 to 4,347 by December 31, 2012

Performance Measures

- ❖ Number of motorcyclist fatalities
- ❖ Number of unhelmeted motorcyclist fatalities
- ❖ Number of injured motorcyclists

Activity Measures

- ❖ Number of MSP course enrollments
- ❖ Number of new training sites
- ❖ Number of motorcycle enforcement initiatives implemented
- ❖ Number of motorcycle safety educational and public awareness efforts conducted

STRATEGIES

Educational Programs and Public Awareness

Motorcycle Rider Training Program

New motorcyclists will continue to be encouraged to complete a motorcycle safety education course and to become licensed operators. The Department of Motor Vehicles MSP will continue to foster the statewide availability of rider education programs and to increase the number of sites providing training based on criteria established by the MSF. A portion of the motorcycle license and registration fees is set aside to fund this initiative. The public will be informed of the benefits, availability and location of motorcycle rider education courses throughout the state.

Experienced Rider Course (ERC) programs will continue to be offered under the name Basic Rider Course-Level 2 (BRC2). Since nearly 25% of motorcyclists killed in crashes are improperly licensed, the MSP is pursuing the road test waiver benefit for completion of the BRC2 as an incentive for experienced unlicensed riders to become trained and licensed. The Three-Wheeled Motorcycle BRC (3W-BRC) will continue to be offered to address the growing popularity of three-wheeled motorcycles.

Motorcyclist Intervention and Education

The nature and operation of motorcycles make them more susceptible to crashes than other types of vehicles when the operator uses alcohol. Motorcycle operators and passengers are also more likely to suffer serious injury or death in a crash than occupants of other types of vehicles. Educational materials that bring this increased risk to the attention of motorcyclists are needed and new channels for their distribution will continue to be developed.

Public Awareness of Motorcycle Safety

Public information and education (PI&E) activities that stress the proper use of approved safety equipment, especially helmets, are important for improving motorcycle safety. Efforts to increase awareness and educate the general driving population about motorcycle safety issues will continue. These efforts include New York's participation in the national initiative recognizing May as Motorcycle Safety Awareness month;

the use of variable message signs promoting motorcycle safety; and public awareness campaigns and PI&E materials designed to heighten the awareness of the motoring public regarding the need to share the road safely with motorcycles.

Partners

The GTSC will work with its partners, including the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles, the NYS Association of Traffic Safety Boards, the New York State Police and the NYS Association of Chiefs of Police, to promote local rider safety education opportunities within their respective communities.

Program Quality

Maintaining the quality of the instructor cadre in terms of skills, knowledge and motivation is a challenge in every program. To maintain a high quality program, New York will use a variety of outreach modes to improve the availability of training for providers and instructors and aid in the retention of qualified instructors. A MSF-qualified team makes visits to each of the public training sites every year to ensure the program continues to maintain high standards for course delivery.

Enforcement

Motorcycle Enforcement Checkpoints

Motorcycle safety checkpoints will continue in strategic locations to check for license and registration violations, non-compliant helmets, faulty or illegal equipment and other violations. Variable message signs and other methods may be used to ensure mandatory compliance with the checkpoint. The checkpoints may also be used in conjunction with PI&E and research initiatives.

Officer Training and Local Enforcement

Police officer training on motorcycle enforcement issues and techniques will again be conducted. The training will focus on safety violations such as unapproved helmets, equipment violations such as tires and lighting, and altered motorcycles, especially those with loud exhaust systems. Trained officers will be deployed to enforce these laws and issue tickets to violators.

Motorcycle Enforcement Training

The New York State Police and the Law Enforcement Liaison from the NYS Association of Chiefs of Police will again partner in presenting the Practical Guidelines for Motorcycle Enforcement training program. This innovative and specialized training curriculum was designed to present practical and comprehensive information on motorcycle safety and motorcycle laws. The hands-on instruction provides officers, especially those assigned to patrol duties, with the knowledge and skills to educate motorcyclists and the public on motorcycle safety and to also enhance the enforcement of motorcycle laws in New York State. In addition to law enforcement, instructors from the MSF and other traffic safety partners will benefit from this training. The training program is supported by the GTSC and the MSP.

Research and Evaluation

Research studies and data analyses that focus on identifying issues that contribute to crashes involving motorcycles and motorcyclist injuries and fatalities will continue to be supported. Evaluations and assessments to determine the effectiveness of various strategies and programs will also be encouraged. One example of an important study in this area is an evaluation of New York's Motorcycle Safety Program to determine the effectiveness of the rider education program in reducing the crash involvement of motorcycle operators who participated in the training program.