

Motorcycle Fatalities Increasing: Read the October 2001 full report "[Fatal Single Vehicle Motorcycle Crashes](#)" (DOT HS 809 360) from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA); a study recently conducted on motorcycle accidents and safety

Here's a summary of NHTSA DOT HS 809 360

Single vehicle motorcycle crashes account for about 45 percent of all motorcyclist fatalities. More than 38,000 motorcyclists have died in single vehicle motorcycle crashes between 1975 and 1999. The report claims to provide data for insight into possible causes for these fatalities.

According to the report, from 1990 through 1999, there were a total of 11,038 fatal single vehicle motorcycle crashes. During that same time period, there were an estimated 294,000 non-fatal single vehicle motorcycle crashes. Of these, an estimated 39,000 involved property damage only and 255,000 involved injuries.

Motorcyclist fatalities in single vehicle motorcycle crashes decreased each year from 1990 to 1996, reaching a historic low of 937 in 1996 and again in 1997. In 1998, the fatalities increased to 1,042 (11.2 percent increase); in 1998 and in 1999 they increased to 1,140 (9.4 percent). The overall increase in motorcyclist fatalities from 1997 to 1999 was 203 (21.7 percent).

Report Conclusions: Findings from the FARS (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) data illustrate possible reasons for motorcyclist fatalities in single vehicle motorcycle crashes:

- **Helmet use among fatally injured motorcyclists below 50 percent**
- **More motorcyclist fatalities are occurring on rural roads**
- High blood alcohol levels are a major problem among motorcycle operators
- **Half of the fatalities are related to negotiating a curve prior to the crash**
- Over 80 percent of the fatalities occur off roadway
- Undivided roadways account for a majority of the fatalities
- **Almost two thirds of the fatalities were associated with speeding as an operator contributing factor in the crash**
- **Almost 60 percent of motorcyclist fatalities occur at night**
- Collision with a fixed object is a significant factor in over half of the fatalities
- Braking and steering maneuvers possibly contribute for almost 25 percent of the fatalities
- More riders age 40 and over are getting killed
- Almost one third of the fatally injured operators did not have a proper license

1998 Motorcycle Accident Statistics:

- 2,284 motorcyclists died and approximately 49,000 were injured in highway crashes in the United States.
- Per mile traveled in 1998, a motorcyclist is approximately 16 times more likely to die in a crash than an automobile occupant. And 3x (times) as likely to be injured.

- **Head injury is a leading cause of death in motorcycle crashes.**
- **In 1998, 46% of fatally injured motorcycle drivers were not wearing helmets at the time of the crash.**
- **NHTSA estimates that motorcycle helmets reduce the likelihood of a fatality by 29% in a crash.**
- **In 1998, 41% of all motorcycle drivers involved in fatal crashes were speeding.**
- Nearly one out of five motorcycle drivers (18%) involved in fatal crashes in 1998 was operating with an invalid license at the time of the collision.
- Motorcycle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1998 had higher intoxication rates than any other type of motor vehicle driver at 31%.
- **In 1998, 500 motorcyclists lives were saved due to helmet usage; 307 could have been saved.**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration