

OPP concerned about off-road and motorcycle stats

Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) are reporting that off-road vehicle (ORV) deaths have reached a four-year high, and that has police concerned heading into the Victoria Day long weekend.

A total of 20 people died in ORV incidents in OPP jurisdiction during 2013, compared to 12 in 2012, 14 in 2011 and 17 in 2010. Of the 20 fatalities in 2013, 13 of them were attributed to lack of helmet use and nine of them involved alcohol consumption.

These alarming statistics have OPP warning ORV riders who include alcohol and exclude helmets as part of their riding activity to curb these deadly behaviours before these leading causes of deaths continue to rise.

Police are also asking the public to partner with them to reduce the rising number of ORV fatalities. Officers are calling on the family members and friends of ORV enthusiasts to urge their loved ones to wear a helmet and drive sober.

Over the past 10 years (2004-2013), a total of 263 people have died in ORV incidents within OPP jurisdiction, said OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair. Imagine how much more devastating losing a family member or friend would be if you knew they were impaired or not wearing a helmet and you didn't intervene to save their life.

Motorcycle deaths are another OPP statistic that is on the rise. A total of 28 motorcyclists died (in OPP jurisdiction) in 2013, compared to 26 in 2012 and 21 in 2011. Impaired, aggressive and distracted driving are all common contributing factors in motorcycle crashes investigated by the OPP. Sadly, in some cases, the riders were not doing anything wrong when the collision occurred.

Among the most tragic of the 26 motorcycle fatalities last year are the 11 in which the motorcyclist was driving properly at the time of the collision, observed OPP Chief Superintendent Don Bell, commander of OPP's Highway Safety Division. Far too often, our collision reconstruction investigations reveal that the actions of another driver were a causal factor. This makes motorcycle safety an issue to which all road users need to pay close attention.

Motorcyclists are more vulnerable than other road users because motorcycles are tougher to see than other vehicles and they provide virtually no protection in the event of a crash. For this reason, all motorists need to maintain a keen awareness of their surroundings and always be on watch for motorcycles.

With high volumes of traffic expected over the long weekend, OPP officers throughout the province will be doing their part to keep people safe, both on and off-road. They are counting on one of their most valued partners - the many drivers and ORV enthusiasts who head out this weekend - to drive and ride safely in a collective effort to get through the weekend incident-free.

Leading up to and over the May Long Weekend, OPP are also taking part in Canada Road Safety Week, which runs from May 13 to 19. During the campaign, OPP and their policing partners will be focusing their education and enforcement efforts on the "big four" driving behaviours on Ontario roads that place all roads users at risk. These are driving impaired by alcohol or drugs, failure to use or improper use of seat belts, distracted; and aggressive driving.