

OPP concerned motorcycle deaths heading for seven-year high

With 26 motorcycle fatalities on record so far this year and at least two more months of the motorcycle season remaining, OPP is concerned that 2014 motorcycle deaths could reach a seven-year high.

As of Aug. 18, 25 motorcyclists and one passenger have died in motorcycle crashes within OPP jurisdiction this year. The high number has prompted police to share some facts and dispel some myths relating to the fatal motorcycle collisions it investigates in an effort to raise awareness about motorcycle safety.

Earlier this month, OPP Aircraft Enforcement Patrol (AEP) clocked a motorcyclist travelling at 210 km/h, charging him under Ontario's stunt driving law. The AEP airplane conducts patrol throughout the province and is highly effective at spotting motorcycles and other vehicles travelling at high rates of speed.

Other than a careless few that we come across during our enforcement operations, the OPP believes that Ontario motorcyclists in general recognize that they are a vulnerable road user and demonstrate safe, defensive driving, observed OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, provincial commander of traffic safety and operational support. We are relying on motorcyclists and the motoring public to work with us and join in our efforts to keep motorcycling safe. The solution is simple: ride and drive within the law.

Myth: Young, inexperienced motorcyclists are the most vulnerable, at-risk riders and account for the largest number of victims who die in motorcycle crashes in Ontario.

Fact: From 2008 to 2014 (as of Aug. 18), only 16 of the 175 motorcyclists who have died on Ontario roads were younger than 25. The age group with the highest rate of fatality is 45 to 54, which comprises 48 of the 175 victims. The second highest age group is 55 to 64, with 39 victims in that category. Combined, these two age groups account for almost half of the fatalities (87).

Myth: Those who die in motorcycle crashes are doing something wrong at the time of the incident. Like other drivers, motorcyclists can avoid crashes if they drive properly and within the law.

Fact: Between 2008 and 2014, for 50 of the 175 motorcycle victims, the driver of the motorcycle was driving properly at the time. Far too often, the actions of another driver are a causal factor in motorcycle crashes. Motorcycles are much harder to see than other vehicles. It is important for riders to wear high visibility equipment and put themselves in the proper lane positioning to increase chances of being seen by other motorists. Motorist sharing the road with motorcyclists need to maintain a keen awareness of surroundings and always be on watch for motorcycles, especially in blind spots before changing lanes.

Myth: Motorcyclists are at far greater risk of crashing when riding on wet roads.

Fact: While true that riding on wet roads places an additional risk on riders, 158 of the 175 motorcyclists who have died between 2008 and 2014 (to date) were riding on dry roads.

Other facts relating to the 175 OPP-investigated motorcycle fatalities from 2008 to 2014 (as of Aug. 18) are that 168 of the victims were the drivers, seven were passengers; and 156 of the victims were men, 19 were women.

Contributing factors in these mishaps include speed in 43 of the deaths; loss of control in 29; alcohol in 21; failure to yield in 20; and inattention in 18.