

OPP reports motorcycle deaths up, off-road vehicle deaths down heading into Victoria Day

As OPP gets ready for a busy Victoria Day long weekend on Ontario roads and trails, they are reporting a nine-year high in motorcycle deaths.

Police report 32 people died in motorcycle crashes on OPP-patrolled roads in 2014.

In contrast, OPP-investigated off-road vehicle (ORV) deaths were the lowest they had been in 11 years, with 11 people having died in 2014.

While the geography and terrain are vastly different for these two driver classes, there are a few common factors that place both of them at a higher risk of death than those who drive other types of motor vehicles.

For one thing, neither the motorcyclist or ORV rider are restrained in these types of machines and ejection almost always occurs in the event of a crash.

Last year, all 11 people who died in ORV crashes and all 32 of those who died in motorcycle crashes were ejected, OPP reported. Ejection is one of the most injurious, if not fatal, events that can occur to a person in any type of vehicle crash and motorcycles and ORVs are no exception.

The hard truth about crashes is bodies are soft, and everything else is hard.

When one is ejected from a motorcycle, ORV or any other type of motor vehicle, they become a flying projectile, traveling at the same speed as the vehicle was traveling at the time of the crash. This is also the rate of speed when the body makes contact with whatever surface/object (windshield, pavement, rock, tree, etc.) breaks their flight after they are ejected.

Another common factor has to do with driving behaviour rather than the vehicles.

Loss of control and/or speed almost always exceed other factors in fatal crashes involving motorcycles and ORVs from year to year, according to OPP.

Six of last year's 11 fatal ORV crash victims lost control of their vehicle. Loss of control and/or speed were factors in 14 of the 32 motorcycle deaths.

In the event of a crash, wearing an approved helmet gives motorcyclists, ORV riders and passengers their best chance of avoiding serious head injury and death in the event of a crash. Over the last five years (2010-2014), of the 74 riders who died in ORV crashes, almost half (36) of them were not wearing a helmet at the time.

Over the Victoria Day long weekend, OPP expects to see motorcyclists and ORV riders in great numbers throughout the province. They are counting on all of them to keep themselves, their passengers and all those with whom they share the road and trails safe at all times. This means refraining from consuming alcohol and drugs before heading out for a ride and observing all other laws associated with motorcycle and ORV riding.

Just as important is the need for all motorists to increase awareness of their surroundings on the road, to always be on the lookout for those often hard to spot motorcyclists and to share the road safely with them.

OPP is also reminding motorists that Canada Road Safety Week runs through the long weekend (May 12 to 18). This is an annual, national campaign during which OPP will be joining its policing partners to raise awareness through enforcement and education of the four main driving behaviours that put all road users at risk. These are driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs; lack of occupant restraint; driving while distracted; and aggressive driving.

Every road user can play a part in reducing the 'Big 4' killers on the roads during Canada Road Safety Week and throughout the year.