

Police urge caution when riding motorcycles

From the desk of
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Let's face it. While motorcycles are cool, they just aren't as safe as cars.

Motorcycles can travel as fast or faster than cars, however they lack car safety features most people take for granted. Since motorcycles don't have an exterior frame to absorb collisions, the impact of a collision is born directly by the bike and the rider. Motorcycles can be inherently less safe than cars, but there a lot of things motorcyclists and drivers in cars can do to keep everyone safe.

Here is a list of safety tips.

? Wear a proper helmet. Helmets protect your head, and head injuries are the leading cause of death for motorcycle riders. Make sure it's a proper fit and doesn't obstruct your vision. Opt for a full-face helmet with protection all the way around.

? Look twice ? this tip is more for drivers than bikers. Look for motorcyclists. Motorcycles are small and tough to see. Keep your eyes and ears open for motorcycles. Look twice before changing lanes and always check your blind spot. For motorcyclists, never assume that a driver sees you. Ride defensively and take responsibility for staying safe around cars. Also, keep an eye lead to ensure that you know what's ahead. Potholes, stray and domestic animals or debris can be dangerous for motorcyclists. A small visual profile can create more vulnerability.

? Educate passengers. Ensure that your passenger is wearing the proper motorcycle protective gear. Practise riding with a passenger in a safe place like a parking lot.

? Watch the weather. Riding a bike in the rain is much riskier than driving a car. With only two wheels, you have half the traction of a car. Without windshield wipers, your visibility is compromised. Remember that when rain hits the road, it brings up oil and other residue, making the road extremely slippery. If heavy rain, snow or ice is predicted, leave the bike at home.

? Leave enough space between motorcycles and cars. Although motorcycles are smaller and lighter than cars, they need space to stop and maneuver. For motorcyclists, practise stops in a safe environment and know how much space you need.

? Avoid distractions. Distracted driving is a dangerous and costly idea, but it's even worse when you're riding a bike. You need to see other vehicles and avoid them rather than bet on them seeing you. If you are fiddling with your phone or other electronic device, you're reaction time is cut by several precious seconds.

? Ride within your skills. Riding a motorcycle is a skill and it's something you need to develop. Becoming an expert rider takes time. To stay safe, always ride within your skill level. Take the time to build your skills and only ride in situations where you know your skills are up to the job.

? Choose a bike that fits your body. Bikes come in dramatically different shapes and sizes. Try a bike on for size, and if possible, take it for a spin; you'll find that the ergonomic experience of riding will differ dramatically from bike to bike. That sport bike you thought was so cool, for instance, might strain your wrists to the point of discomfort. Conversely, that cruiser might win you over with its low seat and manageable center of gravity. Make sure the bike is a proper fit for your body.

? Get the right gear. Wear the proper equipment. Since a motorcycle offers little protection in a collision, wearing the proper equipment may offer you some protection. Protect your feet. You want sturdy shoes with a rugged sole. Look for shoes or boots in a durable material for better protection. Wear all the protective equipment all the time.

? Take a motorcycle safety course. The class will teach you about the traffic safety laws that apply to motorcycles, how to respond to emergency situations on a motorcycle and give you a chance to try out your new skills in a controlled environment. Taking a motorcycle safety course prepares you to hit the road with more confidence. Even if you are an experienced rider, the course will provide you with more confidence in your riding ability.

Several provisions of the Highway Traffic Act apply to motorcycles. A \$110 fine can be imposed for failing to wear a proper helmet on a motorcycle or carrying a passenger younger than 16 who is not wearing proper helmet.