

Dept. of Transportation: Motorists asked to look-twice, share the road with motorcycles

Posted on Thursday, May 14, 2020

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May is “Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month” and traffic safety officials with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) are asking all motor vehicle operators to share the road, be alert and safe. About 550,000 Wisconsin residents hold a motorcycle license.

“Because of their smaller profile, it’s easy to misjudge the speed and distance of an approaching motorcycle,” said David Pabst, Director of WisDOT’s Bureau of Transportation Safety. “That’s why we ask car and truck drivers to look twice at motorcycles before pulling out from a stop sign, turning left at an intersection or changing lanes.”

Last year in Wisconsin, there were 1,799 motorcycle crashes in which 1,532 motorcyclists were injured and 81 were killed. Safety on the roadways requires that everyone do their part:

- If you’re driving a car or truck, watch carefully for motorcycles before pulling out from a stop sign, turning left or changing lanes;
- Motorcyclists should wear all the gear, all the time, including visible and protective equipment;
- Anticipate potential problems by focusing on the road ahead. Gravel or other debris on roadways present special challenges for motorcyclists;
- Get properly licensed. Consider taking a motorcycle safety course.

“Safe motorcycling requires unique physical skills and mental concentration,” Pabst said. “One trend we see is middle-aged people who drove a motorcycle many years ago, then resume riding on a cycle that’s larger and more powerful.”

As a group, the motorcycling community is aging. The average age of a motorcyclist involved in a fatal crash increased from 30 years old in 1992 to 45 in 2019.