

Motorcycle Crashes Can Be Deadly

The vision of driving down a country road with the wind in your hair atop a large motorcycle is an attractive one for many people, and the number of motorcycles on America's highways is growing. Although motorcycles share the road with cars and trucks, collisions involving a motorcycle are different and often more serious than automobile accidents.

Collision Prone

Motorcycles (on average) are involved in more collisions than other vehicles. In addition to all of the usual things that cause accidents (speeding, bad weather, driving under the influence), motorcyclists face certain other hazards. Motorcycles are smaller than cars and trucks and they are sometimes harder to see. In over half of the cases studied, the drivers of cars involved in a collision with a motorcycle said that they did not see the motorcyclist coming. The smaller size of a motorcycle also makes it more vulnerable to road hazards. And, because motorcycles are more maneuverable than cars, they are sometimes put into unsafe positions.

Motorcyclists are also much more likely to be injured or killed in an accident than someone riding in a car or truck. According to the National Transportation Safety Board, a motorcycle rider is 18 times more likely to die in a collision than someone in a car. Motorcycle riders also are far more likely to suffer serious injuries in a collision.

Head Injuries

A common kind of serious injury associated with motorcycle accidents is a head injury. Because a motorcyclist is often thrown off of the bike in a collision, traumatic brain injuries are 10 times more common in motorcycle accidents than in other vehicle accidents. Studies have shown that the best way to prevent these serious injuries is the most obvious one – wear a helmet! Heavy riding boots, gloves, vests, and long pants can also protect riders if they do crash.

Take Extra Care

Because of the added danger a motorcycle presents, motorcyclists need to take extra care when driving. They should drive safely (as should all drivers), and they should wear the appropriate protective gear. Motorcyclists need to understand the special problems that their vehicles present for other drivers, and drive very defensively. However, motorcycle safety is a two-way street. Drivers of other vehicles need to “drive aware” and should keep a careful eye out for motorcycles. Although motorcycles are more maneuverable than other vehicles, motorcyclists have the same right to use the road that cars do, and this right should be respected. Other vehicles should give motorcycles a wide berth—a small tap with the bumper probably will not hurt an SUV, but it can be fatal to a motorcyclist.

If everyone obeys these simple rules, they can make riding motorcycles less dangerous and more like the “open-road” ideal.