



For Immediate Release

August 9, 2007

**Joint Press Release: Washington State Patrol
Port Orchard Police Department**

**Kitsap County Sheriff's Office
Bremerton Police Department**

Motorcycle safety

Dangerous roadways summer '07, part 1

"It's the freedom," some riders say. Or it's the "feel of the road" coupled with the adrenaline rush of speed, say others. And for many, it's an economical alternative to the increasingly high cost of fuel. Certain personalities cite the draw of belonging to a unique brotherhood of like-minded persons. For motorcycle enthusiasts, state-wide, the reasons are many and varied when asked "why" motorcycle riding is their favorite pastime, weekend hobby or primary method of transportation.

Unfortunately it's also a hard fact that motorcycle injuries and death are on the rise across the state and across the nation. For the fun value of riding a motorcycle, the trade-off is in protective safety, which is practically non-existent. It's become increasingly important that good motorcycle safety practices are learned and used always whenever the engine is "kicked over."

With summer in full swing and the month of August leading the year with the greatest number of traffic fatalities than any other month, local law enforcement agencies want to remind motorists and motorcyclists about roadway safety in Kitsap County. The Washington State Patrol, Bremerton and Port Orchard Police Departments along with the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office have chosen August to increase patrols and safety awareness throughout the county.

With a goal of zero fatalities during the month, law enforcement this week focuses on motorcycle safety.

Facts:

- Motorcycle fatalities in Washington have more than doubled from 37 in 1994 to 82 in 2006. Motorcycle registrations have increased 75% during the same period. Fatalities have increased faster than registrations. The crashes are generally the result of motorcycle operator error. No longer are crashes mostly the fault of “the other guy.”
- For calendar year 2007, there have been 25 motorcycle fatalities through June 13.
- Motorcycle fatalities occur most frequently on county roads (38%) followed by secondary state highways (31%) and city streets (22%).
- Most motorcycle fatalities are single vehicle incidents and occur during daylight hours and on dry roadways between April and September.
- The most common driving errors associated with motorcycle fatalities are lane travel problems, impairment, excessive speed and inattention. The single biggest cause of motorcycle fatalities is excessive speed and inexperience, ie: drivers exceeding their skill level. Speed reduces reaction time and increases the seriousness of injuries.
- Forty percent of fatally injured motorcyclists had a blood alcohol concentration of .08% or greater. Alcohol and other drugs are present more frequently in motorcycle fatalities than with any other type of vehicle.
- Fully 36% of the operators killed in motorcycle crashes do not hold a motorcycle endorsement issued by the Washington State Department of Licensing or the licensing authority of another state.

Two age groups of motorcycle riders appear to be having the most trouble: young riders on high-powered machines and older riders who lack appropriate training. The young motorcyclists are riding their machines at speeds way above their skill level; older riders are taking up the hobby without investing in safety classes.

All riders benefit from an approved motorcycle safety class. The course of instruction will teach riders how to recognize a collision developing while there is still time to avoid it.

With proper training motorcycle riding is a safe and fun activity. But it's different than driving a car. Years of automobile driving experience doesn't translate to the safe operation of a motorcycle. Every rider, but especially older, “weekend cruisers,” should take an approved motorcycle safety course as soon as they purchase their motorcycle.

Are newer, high-powered motorcycles to blame? Marketing and image plays a role, but the ultimate responsibility lies with the person whose hand is on the throttle. And with motorcycles, that is also the person who will pay the price if something goes awry.

The safety of motorcycle riders remains overwhelmingly in the hands of riders themselves. State, county and municipal law enforcement agencies aggressively enforce speed and traffic laws, but they can't be everywhere at once.

Drive Safe Drive Sober
Wear Protective Gear Slow Down

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