

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: April 26, 2010

Contact: Jamie Ainsworth (225) 925-6998

Highway safety officials urge motorcyclists, other motorists to share the road

May is Motorcyclist Awareness and Safety Month in Louisiana

BATON ROUGE — Louisiana highway safety officials are reminding drivers of motorcycles and other vehicles to share the road to help prevent some of the hundreds of motorcycle-related injuries that occur statewide each year.

Gov. Bobby Jindal has proclaimed May “Motorcyclist Awareness and Safety Month” in Louisiana.

Jindal’s proclamation states that “all licensed vehicle operators have the same rights and privileges on our state roads and highways” and that “all motorists should be aware of their surroundings while driving.”

Louisiana highway crash statistics show that motorcyclists and their passengers are significantly more likely to die or suffer injuries from crashes compared to occupants of other types of motor vehicles.

In 2008 – the latest year for which completed data is available – 63 percent of Louisiana motorcyclists and their passengers involved in crashes were injured, compared with only 46 percent of crash victims in other vehicles.

A similar trend is seen nationally. Research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists are about 37 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die in traffic crashes.

On Louisiana roadways, there were 81 people killed and more than 1,700 people injured in motorcycle crashes in 2008. Motorcycle fatalities accounted for nearly 9 percent of the state’s highway fatalities that same year, and alcohol was a factor in 36 percent of those motorcycle crashes. More than half of the motorcycle deaths occurred in single-vehicle crashes.

Lt. Col. John LeBlanc, executive director of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission, said those statistics show that all motorists need to be very watchful of other vehicles and obey traffic laws.

“With a growing number of motorcycles on the roads, it is important that motorcyclists and drivers of other vehicles observe traffic laws and refrain from illegal behavior such as driving aggressively or driving after drinking,” LeBlanc said. “It’s also important that drivers of motorcycles and passenger cars remain fully aware of each other on the road at all times.”

The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission recommends that all motorcycle owners complete safety courses, wear helmets and follow all traffic laws. Motorcycle drivers are required to pass a skills test and have a motorcycle endorsement on their driver’s license.

The LHSC offers the following guidelines for drivers of motorcycles and other vehicles:

- Never drive while impaired.
- Remember the motorcycle is a vehicle with all the privileges of other vehicles on the roadway. Give the motorcyclist a full lane of travel.
- Motorcycles are smaller than other vehicles, so look carefully before turning or changing lanes.
- If you ride a motorcycle, stay a safe distance from passenger vehicles and wear a helmet.
- Check carefully for motorcycles at intersections. Drivers of all vehicles should slow down and look twice.
- Anticipate a motorcyclist’s maneuvers. Obstructions such as debris and potholes can be dangerous for a motorcyclist, so predict evasive actions.

-end-

