

Idaho Motorcycle Fatality Summary

By Lane Triplett
Vice Chairman MRF A&E

For the last seven years, I have been gathering data from the State of Idaho Vehicle Collision Reports for Motorcycles for the years 2009 through 2016. This project began during one of the initial planning sessions for the Idaho Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) Motorcycle Safety Committee. One of the strategies outlined was to analyze the data and identify some of the circumstances contributing to Idaho's motorcycle fatalities. This analysis continues to be a work in progress and more information and data will be added if it becomes available. This document includes reports from 2012 through 2016. The 2009 through 2011 data has been archived. Most studies of this type require 5 years of data to be considered accurate. This is not a government study. It has been formulated by a motorcyclist. Factual knowledge is the only agenda. This is an Idaho only study. Idaho is a predominantly rural state, but research done in other states may find similar percentages.

There were 22 fatalities in 2012, 26 fatalities in 2013, 25 fatalities in 2014, 28 fatalities in 2015 and 22 fatalities in 2016 included in 121 reports. Moped and scooter crashes are included. Two reports include 2 victims. Eight of these 123 fatalities were passengers (all female). The following chart is a sampling of causation factors. Some crashes include multiple factors. While it is possible that some of the single vehicle crashes may have been affected by an unreported animal or other vehicle, there is no data, physical evidence, or statements within the reports to support such occurrences.

Rider error means that the actions of the rider were the primary cause of the crash. Driver error means that an automobile or other vehicle type caused the crash.

Alcohol and drug use continues to be a significant factor in fatalities. The goal is to provide accurate information about impairment. However, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the effect that impairment may have had in a fatal crash. All levels of alcohol impairment are recorded but those that are under the legal limit are noted as such. It is recognized that some degree of impairment begins below the legal limit. In addition, THC/marijuana use can be detected by a blood test for approximately 30 days. Therefore when a rider tests positive for THC and/or has a low to moderate BAC level, it is difficult to determine to what degree they were under the influence at the time of the crash. But because of the positive drug test, the crash must be recorded as impairment involved. Alcohol/drug use by the drivers of other vehicles shall also be recorded as impairment involved but noted as such. Prescription drugs for depression and others that do not specifically restrict driving may also be a factor in crashes, but because they are legal they are not recorded in the percentages for impairment.

Single Vehicle Crashes – 69		Multi-vehicle Crashes– 52	
Rider Error	59	Rider Error	27
Questionable Rider Error	0	Driver Error**	22
Run-off Corner	46	Rider Violated Driver's ROW	3
Wild/Domestic Animal	9	Run-off Corner – Head on Crash	6
Medical	0	Rider Rear-ended Rider	3
Positive Alcohol/Drug Test	28*	Positive Alcohol/Drug Test	16*
Equipment Failure	3	Equipment Failure	1
Weather	1	Traffic Control Failure	1

*One of these was an intoxicated automobile driver. One rider was under the legal limit at .049, another was at .012, and another at .020.

** One of these is a car violating a motorcyclist's right of way and the rider was intoxicated. (.205)

Of the total 123 fatalities in 121 crash reports, 86 crashes were identified as rider error. Twenty-One of the crashes are without question the fault of another vehicle operator. In six crashes, the rider survived but the passenger did not. This analysis does not include detailed information on serious injuries, levels of injury or other involved crashes.

It should be noted that 26 fatalities were from out of state (24 riders, 2 passengers). Twenty three of those riders were endorsed, three were not, and 3 are unknown. Of the 91 Idaho riders involved in fatal crashes, 55 had their motorcycle endorsement, 36 did not and 3 Idaho residents had an out of state license. One Idaho rider was riding on a suspended license. Of the 91 Idaho riders, only 16 had passed an Idaho rider training course. One Washington licensed rider had passed an Idaho training course. These training and endorsement numbers include the riders that survived when their female passengers did not. Some of these riders may have been trained in other states but such information is unavailable.

It is commonly believed that motorcycle fatalities are generally young men on sport bikes and/or riders not wearing helmets. Here is what the data tells us on these topics:

Ages of the Fatalities		Types of Motorcycles		Helmet Use	
Under 20	3	Cruiser/Tourer	87	Wore a Helmet	51
20-29	16	Sport Bikes	17	Novelty Helmet	0
30-39	19	Dual Sports	6	No Helmet	67
40-49	28	Off-Road	7	Unknown	5
		Moped/Scooter	4		
50-59	32	Total	121	Total	123
60-69	20	Gender		Location	
70-79	43	Male	108	Rural	84
80-89	2	Female* riders/8 passengers	*7 15	Urban	37
Total	123	Total	123	Total	121

General conclusions from this analysis:

- **We (riders) are killing ourselves at a far greater rate than we had ever assumed prior to this study (71% rider error).**
- **69% of victims are over 40 years old and 49% are between the ages of 40 and 59.**
- **Crashes in corners are the biggest killers (38% run off corner).**
- **35% of involved Idaho licensed riders did not have a motorcycle endorsement.**
- **Illegal drug and alcohol use contributed in many cases (36% illegal alcohol/drug involvement by riders).**
- **Drivers violating riders' right-of-way is also a contributing factor (17%).**
- **Only 18% of involved Idaho licensed riders had passed a rider training course.**