

# Motorcycle Accident Deaths and Injuries Increase As Overall Traffic Accident Casualties Decrease

Studies have shown at the national level overall traffic fatalities have been declining year over year. For motorcyclists though, it's not such a rosy picture.

A report by the Governor's Highway Safety Association or (GSA), has shown that while the overall traffic accident related deaths have decreased, motorcyclists deaths have increased a full 6% between 2011 and 2012.

To Some 6% may not sound like much but that 6% amounts to more than 5,000 motorcyclists killed in traffic accidents more than the previous year. Adding to the grim picture not only has the number of deaths increased substantially, the 2011-2012 year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> year in a row that motorcycle accident related deaths have increased; truly a disturbing trend.

Something must be done to make the roads safer for motorcyclists. A few obvious possibilities would be to increase awareness from drivers to be on the lookout for motorcyclists, especially when making a left turn across traffic. Another is to better train the riders themselves to avoid bad situation and keep the showboating to a minimum. However efforts on both those fronts have already been in the works to little apparent success. A third avenue remains – improve the safety equipment on the motorcycles themselves.

While the auto industry has been aggressively improving safety systems on cars and trucks for many years, safety improvements from the motorcycle industry has been spotty. Some companies have developed ABS breaks while for others safety equipment means aftermarket flashing headlamps and extra loud aftermarket exhaust systems. Helmet laws vary from state to state and are often controversial and seen by riders as an infringement on their freedom.

So lets start with improving the braking system with ABS brakes for all street bikes. It may surprise many car drivers that a motorcycles takes just about the same amount of time stop as a car or truck. It would seem the lighter motorcycle would be able to decelerate faster than cars, but with less tire contact on the road there is less surface available for friction to slow things down.

Of course the skill of the rider is also a huge factor when a rider is responding to avoid a crash. The rider must apply the correct amount of force the back and the front breaks without causing the breaks to lock up. Many riders who have not been properly trained also tend to refrain from using the front brakes, but the front breaks create 75% of the bikes stopping power. A rider only has fractions of a second to make the correct choice. Too much breaking on the front is feared though because it may result in being tossed over the handlebars. Too much force on the rear break and the tire will lock up causing the bike to slide instead of stop. ABS breaks allow riders to break harder without being concerned about locking up the wheels.

Computer controlled ABS breaks would make motorcycles safer by preventing the tires from locking up and causing the bike to skid out of control. While many motorcycle manufactures including, BMW, Japanese companies and even Harley Davidson have finally come around in 2008 to offering ABS as a safety options for some models, there is no standard and consumers often go for the most affordable

option. AS a result more motorcycle accident fatalities happen every year that don't have too.

Studies have shown that anti-lock breaks are effective in reducing the number of motorcycle accidents. In fact the California Highway Patrol concluded that ABS breaks on motorcycles increased the safety do much that they now require them on all of their motorcycles.

While some efforts have been made to make ABS breaks a requirement for all new motorcycles by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration so far nothing has stuck.

As a result the vast majority of bikes sold in the US by many manufacturers do not have ABS breaks and the number of motorcycle accidents injuries and deaths continue to rise.