

# Motorcycle season shifts to top gear, riders urged to take steps to ensure safe travel

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*“Gear Up-Ride Smart” Promotes Safety Through Equipment, Training*

**SPRINGFIELD** – With spring cruising in and motorcycle season shifting into top gear, Illinois riders are eager to enjoy warm weather on the open road again. Before taking the first ride of the season, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Illinois State Police remind motorcyclists to take necessary steps to ensure their safety and “Gear Up – Ride Smart.”

The annual campaign urges riders to take precautionary measures before getting back on their bikes. Motorcyclists are encouraged to conduct a pre-ride safety inspection of their bike and refresh their riding skills with a motorcycle training class.

Proper safety gear is essential to safe riding. Motorcyclists are encouraged to wear the right safety equipment and accessories, including high-visibility (Hi Viz) clothing, eye protection, gloves, jackets, pants, boots and a U.S. DOT-approved helmet, at all times.

“While most motorcycles are only on the road for part of the year, they account for almost 15 percent of all traffic fatalities” Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blakenhorne said. “By choosing the proper safety equipment and brushing up on their skills, riders can do their part in making 2016 even safer for motorcycles on Illinois roads. The message is simple: Gear Up – Ride Smart.”

Illinois is one of two states that offer free motorcycle training classes to licensed residents. Since the Cycle Rider Safety Training Program (CRSTP) started in 1976, more than 400,000 riders have learned the basics of motorcycle riding or taken advantage of the opportunity to learn more about motorcycle safety.

The program is available throughout the state for all skill and experience levels. Classes are formulated for beginner, intermediate and advanced riders to teach them how to safely operate a motorcycle and sharpen their knowledge and riding skills. CRSTP is paid for by Illinois motorcyclists through a portion of their license and registration fees. For more information and to register in IDOT’s motorcycle safety courses, click [here](#).

"Motorcycle season is upon us, and with it comes increased need for rider safety," said ISP Director Leo Schmitz. "Alcohol remains the number one contributing factor for motorcycle crashes. We can't stress enough the importance of refraining from drinking alcohol when riding a motorcycle. We encourage riders to participate in a motorcycle safety refresher course, to wear high visibility clothing and a helmet. The proper mind set and the proper gear can assist in preventing a traffic crash, and it can also protect you if you are involved in one."

Alcohol contributes to approximately 40 percent of motorcycle fatalities. The “Don’t Drink and Ride” campaign reminds motorcyclists to never mix alcohol with riding. DUI offenders are subject to penalties including fines, suspension of driving privileges and possible jail time.

### **Other Gear Up- Ride Smart Statistics:**

- Three percent of total vehicle registrations are motorcycles, yet motorcycle fatalities account for more than 14 percent of all vehicle fatalities.
- About half of motorcycle rider fatalities occur in crashes involving just the motorcycle. About 40 percent involve motorcycle riders who had been drinking.

- Motorcycle fatalities decreased from 155 in 2013 to 119 in 2014. The number increased to 146 in 2015, according to preliminary data.
- Motorcyclists need to be properly licensed and continue training, especially after a new bike purchase.

Check out this [video](#) for useful tips on how to stay safe this riding season. To learn more about IDOT's motorcycle safety initiative, please visit [www.startseeingmotorcycles.org](http://www.startseeingmotorcycles.org).

For additional riding tips, visit the [Motorcycle Safety Foundation](#),