

Idaho Motorcycle Fatality Summary
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Since 2010, I have been gathering data from the State of Idaho Vehicle Collision Reports for Motorcycles for the years 2009 through 2023. 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 2019 through 2023. The 2009 through 2018 data has been archived.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.

There were 25 fatalities in 2019, 27 fatalities in 2020, 33 fatalities in 2021, 29 fatalities in 2022, and 39 fatalities in 2023 included in 149 reports. Moped and scooter crashes are included. Four reports include 2 victims. Six of these 153 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 –78		Multi-vehicle Crashes–71	
Rider Error	74	Rider Error	44
Road Hazard	1	Driver Error	26
Run-off Corner	51	Rider Violated Driver’s ROW	4
Wild/Domestic Animal	2	Run-off Corner – Head on Crash	5
Medical	0	Rider Rear-ended Rider	4
Positive Alcohol/Drug Test	22**	Positive Alcohol/Drug Test	16* **
Equipment Failure	1	Wild/Domestic Animal	1
Weather	0	Traffic Control-Failure	0

*Six of these were intoxicated automobile drivers. **Four riders were under the legal limit of .08. Their BACs were .016, .02, .068, and .041.

Of the total 153 fatalities in 149 crash reports, 118 crashes were identified as rider error. Twenty-six of the crashes are without question the fault of another vehicle operator. In three 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 23 fatalities were from out of state (23 riders, 0 passengers). Thirteen of those riders were endorsed, ten were not. Of the 127 Idaho riders involved in fatal crashes, 63 had their motorcycle endorsement, and 64 did not. Two Idaho residents had an out of state license. Five Idaho riders were riding without a driver's license. Of the 127 Idaho riders, only 13 had passed an Idaho rider 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	108	Wore a Helmet	88
20-29	17	Sport Bikes	28	Novelty Helmet	0
30-39	16	Dual Sports	7	No Helmet	65
40-49	32	Off-Road	6	Unknown	0
		Moped/Scooter	0		
50-59	38	Total	149	Total	153
60-69	32	Gender		Location	
70-79	11	Male	142	Rural	100
80-99	4	Female* * 5 riders/ 6 passengers	11	Urban	49
Total	153	Total	153	Total	149

General conclusions from this analysis:

- We (riders) are at fault in fatal crashes at a far greater rate than we had ever assumed prior to this study (≈79% rider error).
- 76% of victims are over 40 years old and 46% are between the ages of 40 and 59.
- Crashes in corners are the biggest killers (≈38% run off corner).
- 50% of involved Idaho resident riders did not have a motorcycle endorsement.
- Illegal drug and alcohol use, although seemingly decreasing, contributed to many cases (≈23% illegal alcohol/drug involvement by riders).
- Drivers violating riders' right-of-way is also a contributing factor (≈17%).
- Only 10% of involved Idaho licensed riders had passed a rider training course.
- Over time, relating to fatal crashes, completion of rider training by the operator has decreased while incidents of rider error have increased.