

Idaho Motorcycle Fatality Summary
By Lane Triplett
Idaho Coalition for Motorcycle Safety

For the last nine years, I have been gathering data from the State of Idaho Vehicle Collision Reports for Motorcycles for the years 2009 through 2018. 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 2014 through 2018. The 2009 through 2013 data has been archived.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 2014, 28 fatalities in 2015, 22 fatalities in 2016, 25 fatalities in 2017, and 37 fatalities in 2018 included in 135 reports. Moped and scooter crashes are included. Two reports include 2 victims. Nine of these 137 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 –71		Multi-vehicle Crashes–64	
Rider Error	67	Rider Error	37
Questionable Rider Error	0	Driver Error**	24
Run-off Corner	50	Rider Violated Driver’s ROW	6
Wild/Domestic Animal	3	Run-off Corner – Head on Crash	7
Medical	0	Rider Rear-ended Rider	2
Positive Alcohol/Drug Test	31*	Positive Alcohol/Drug Test	19*
Equipment Failure	1	Equipment Failure	1
Weather	1	Traffic Control Failure	1

*Three of these were intoxicated automobile drivers. One rider was under the legal limit at .049, another was at .012, another at .020. another at .046 and another at .014 and another at .036.

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

Of the total 137 fatalities in 135 crash reports, 104 crashes were identified as rider error. Twenty-four of the crashes are without question the fault of another vehicle operator. In seven 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 30 fatalities were from out of state (27riders, 3 passengers). Seventeen of those riders were endorsed, nine were not, and 4 are unknown. Of the 106 Idaho riders involved in fatal crashes, 56 had their motorcycle endorsement, 49 did not, and 1 is unknown. 3 Idaho residents had an out of state license. One Idaho rider was riding on a suspended license. Of the 106 Idaho riders, only 22 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	5	Cruiser/Tourer	93	Wore a Helmet	53
20-29	20	Sport Bikes	22	Novelty Helmet	0
30-39	20	Dual Sports	7	No Helmet	80
40-49	30	Off-Road	11	Unknown	4
		Moped/Scooter	2		
50-59	35	Total	135	Total	137
60-69	21	Gender		Location	
70-79	4	Male	120	Rural	91
80-89	2	Female*	17	Urban	44
		*8 riders/9 passengers			
Total	137	Total	137	Total	135

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 (≈77% rider error).
- 68% of victims are over 40 years old and 47% are between the ages of 40 and 59.
- Crashes in corners are the biggest killers (≈37% run off corner).
- 46% of involved Idaho licensed riders did not have a motorcycle endorsement.
- Illegal drug and alcohol use contributed in many cases (≈31% illegal alcohol/drug involvement by riders).
- Drivers violating riders' right-of-way is also a contributing factor (≈18%).
- Only 21% of involved Idaho licensed riders had passed a rider training course.