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For Immediate Release

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Increasing Interest in Motorcycle Riding Means Increasing Risks for Inexperienced Riders

Motorcycles can be dangerous, especially for inexperienced riders.

WSP advises new and prospective riders to get the safety training they need and to obey speed laws.

Olympia, Washington: Warmer weather often brings more motorcycles onto Washington roadways. The state's natural beauty and miles of scenic byways are enticements to those seeking the open road. With the recent rise in gasoline prices, spring's appeal may be even greater this year. That's why the Washington State Patrol (WSP) is getting an early start on next month's Motorcycle Safety Awareness campaign.

WSP wants to remind all road users that motorcycles are not only a popular form of transportation for millions, but they can also unfortunately offer an increased level of danger for riders, especially those who are inexperienced and lack the skills, training, and equipment necessary to ride safely.

National statistics show the fatality rate for motorcyclists is up to 27 times higher than that of passenger car occupants. Motorcyclists account for 15% of all vehicular fatalities in our country despite motorcycles making up only 3.5% of the registered vehicles. Like all vehicle types, speed is a common factor in motorcycle deaths. For comparison, speed was a factor in 33% of all motorcycle fatalities in the US in recent years, compared to 22% for passenger car fatalities.

Younger, more inexperienced riders, are more likely to be involved in speeding incidents and are the most likely age group to be involved in fatality collisions. Riders ages 21–24 account for as much as 49% of the speed related fatalities nationwide.

WSP emphasizes that motorcycle safety is everyone's responsibility. All drivers and riders must obey speed laws, stay attentive, and operate vehicles safely and soberly.

- **Drivers:** Check blind spots and give motorcyclists ample space. Motorcycles have the same rights as any other vehicle on the road.
- **Riders:** Avoid excessive speed and erratic maneuvers. Make yourself visible to surrounding traffic.

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- **Family and friends:** Encourage safe decision-making. Ensure inexperienced riders and drivers have proper training and equipment, and speak up if safety is a concern.

The Washington State Patrol advises all motorcyclists to:

1. Always follow traffic laws.
2. Always obey the speed limit and adjust speed for road and traffic conditions.
3. Always **wear** a DOT compliant helmet and protective gear.
4. Complete rider safety education courses and maintain a valid motorcycle endorsement.
5. Always be alert to your surroundings, focused on safe movements, and ride defensively. Anticipate the mistakes of others. In a collision with a larger vehicle, you lose even if you were in the right.
6. **NEVER** ride impaired.

“Motorcycles lack some of the structural safety engineered into modern automobiles and depend more acutely on the rider’s skill, reflexes, and attention level,” said WSP Chief John R. Batiste. “The Washington State Patrol urges those thinking about starting to ride to get all the training you can, invest in all appropriate safety gear, and to always be keenly aware of your speed and surrounding traffic. We want everyone to get home safely, every time.”

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