

Live to Ride Another Day Motorcyclists Are High Risk Road Users

(Burnaby, BC) – Motorcycle riders are among the most vulnerable road users in British Columbia. Motorcycling has become increasingly more popular as a means of transportation and as a leisure activity. Add the fact that parts of British Columbia have a longer riding season, and the result is that crashes involving motorcycles are on the rise.

It is because motorcycling is a high risk activity that the Government of British Columbia has proclaimed May 2009, Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, and why The Office of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles and The Coroners Service of British Columbia are currently co-sponsoring a multi-partner review of motorcycle safety in British Columbia.

BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation Executive Director, Allan Lamb is pleased that the government has made this proclamation, “it should remind road users that they must pay attention and be aware of each other.”

“Motorcycles are not easily seen,” adds Lamb. “Many crashes involving motorcycles are due to speed and poor riding conditions, but a significant number occur at intersections in broad daylight on dry streets where drivers fail to yield to the right of way of the motorcycle.”

Motorcycles represent only 1.5% of insured B.C. vehicles, but 10% of all road fatalities.

There are also more middle-aged riders, often referred to as “rubies” (rich urban bikers), taking to the road. Allan Lamb advises, “that for middle age riders who perhaps have not driven a motorcycle for many years or ride very infrequently during the summer season, a refresher course – even every spring - could save your life.”

Lamb says there is also a message for parents when it comes to young riders. Young and new riders are involved in a disproportionately high number of motorcycle crashes. Over the past ten years, 25% of motorcycle fatalities were riders aged 16 to 25.

Next to speed, inattention and inexperience are the most significant contributing factors in a motorcycle crash. Lamb strongly believes that parents should get involved and stay involved with the young adults as they are the most likely to become involved in a crash before the ages of 25. “Motorcycles are not like other vehicles. Riders are not surrounded by 1200 kg of protective metal and don’t have other protective devices like seat belts and air bags.”

Young drivers in B.C. who have already gone through the Graduated Licensing Program to drive a car don’t have to repeat the process if they opt to start riding a motorcycle.

Lamb suggests that a graduating licensing program similar to the European model, that restricts engine size, be made mandatory for young people in applying for a motorcycle license regardless.

No matter what, age today's motorcyclist is generally a safer rider than generations past with almost seventy percent of all newly licensed motorcyclists in Canada having taken a rider training course.

The BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation offers some tips for staying safe on a motorcycle:

- Ride like you're invisible – Don't assume other drivers can see you.
- Watch out for left-turning vehicles – Don't assume they will wait for you to drive through the intersection. They may not even see you.
- Dress as if you plan to crash – Wear appropriate gear to maximize your protection that is "armoured" bright and reflective.
- Be aware of hazardous road conditions – Wet roads, sand, gravel, potholes and other hazards may cause a motorcycle to fall.
- Pay attention to posted speeds and watch the road ahead – Reduce speed on curves and watch for oncoming vehicles. Many crashes happen when a rider overshoots the road ahead or crosses the centre line.
- **WEAR A HELMET** – Helmets are mandatory in B.C. and prevent head injuries in 67 percent of crashes and 29 per cent of deaths. Make sure your helmet meets current safety standards.
- **NEVER drive a car or a motorcycle while impaired** – Driving is impaired when the ability to do so is affected by any substance or condition that changes the mood or perception of reality of the driver. Alcohol or drugs, illicit or prescription, and even fatigue and stress will impair your driving. A combination of any or all of these things can be deadly.

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Available for Interview:

Allan Lamb, Executive Director for the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation

About BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation

The BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation is a non-profit registered charity working with families, communities and business partners to reduce the number and severity of traffic crashes and injuries in B.C. For more information visit www.BCAATSF.ca or call 604-298-5107.

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