

Motorcycle season should make motorists extra cautious

By Ron Klick for Safe Communities

Spring is in the air! As the snow melts and temperatures rise, area motorists should be alert to the increasing number of motorcycles on the road. Recent years of near record motorcycle sales have put more two wheelers into the traffic stream.

There are two things the driver of an automobile or truck should remember about motorcycles. First, they are smaller than other vehicles and, therefore, harder to see. It requires extra diligence to make sure you've taken them into account along with other objects in the roadway.

Second, remember that a motorcyclist doesn't have the same bubble of protection the driver of a four-wheeled vehicle does. If there is a crash, a motorcyclist may have only the clothes he or she is wearing to protect them from injury. So, while you might have a "fender bender" crash with another car or truck which results only in property damage, almost all crashes involving motorcycles result in some injury to the motorcycle rider.

Each year, hundreds of motorcycle riders and passengers are injured or killed in traffic crashes. Many of these are collisions in which vehicles pull out or turn in front of motorcycles without even seeing them. Others are crashes resulting from a motorcycle losing control trying to avoid a collision.

Here are some tips for motor vehicle operators to keep the road safer:

- When practical, yield the right of way to a motorcycle.
- Be especially careful to check your "blind spot" when changing lanes.
- Remember that obstructions such as parked cars that might not mask a larger vehicle can still hide a motorcycle.
- While they follow the same basic traffic rules you do in your car, motorcycles may have to move around in a traffic lane to avoid road debris and other hazards. This is normal but you may have to allow extra space.
- Remember that motorcycles have the same rights and responsibilities as any other motor vehicle. Share the road.

For more information on these and other safe motoring tips contact a local motorcycle dealership or visit the Wisconsin Department of Transportation website at www.dot.wisconsin.gov.