

Goal

This program will provide information and tips for safely driving a motorcycle both on public streets and highways and off-terrain.

Objectives

Following this safety training program, motorcycle drivers will be able to explain the importance of participating in a motorcycle education program, required equipment for motorcycles and motor driven cycles in Texas, motorcycle operator licensing requirements in Texas, registration, inspection and insurance requirements, suggested personal protective equipment, and general motorcycle riding safety tips.

Overview

Motorcycling is very popular in Texas. We have one of the largest motorcycle populations in the United States. Before you take to the road, you should know the Texas laws governing motorcycles, and the common sense safety rules. Experienced and knowledgeable motorcyclists would rather be riding than fighting a legal battle or recovering from a crash.

If you have never ridden a motorcycle, you should know that a motorcycle only looks easy to ride. Motorcycles are different from other vehicles – having two wheels places more demand on the operator for balance and coordination. The motorcycle's smaller size makes it harder for others to see it in traffic and the driver is more vulnerable to injury in a crash. Riding a motorcycle requires special skills and knowledge beyond those required for driving a car.

On today's highways, there are large numbers of motorcycle riders and even larger numbers of automobile drivers who do not understand how to safely mix in traffic. This lack of knowledge has resulted in an increase in motorcycle-related crashes. The key to safety is understanding and learning how to share the roadway.

Knowing all you can about the motorcycle you ride, or intend to ride, is good preparation for safe and enjoyable riding. Learning to ride off the street in Texas Department

of Public Safety (DPS) "The Course for Motorcycle Riders" is good insurance. When you take to the road, you will be able to concentrate on the traffic because control of the motorcycle becomes second nature with the proper instruction.

There are plenty of things on the highway that can cause you trouble. Your motorcycle should not be one of them. Three ways to be sure your motorcycle won't let you down are:

- Make sure you have the right equipment to begin with.
- Keep your motorcycle in safe riding condition.
- Avoid adding accessories or making modifications that make your motorcycle harder to handle.

Equipment

Texas Law requires the following equipment on all **Motorcycles and Motor Driven Cycles**:

1. Wheel Assembly
2. Exhaust System
3. Tail Lamp (1)
4. Stop Lamp (1)
5. License Plate Lamp
6. Rear Red Reflector
7. Head Lamp (1)
8. Motorcycle, Serial, or Vehicle Identification Number
9. Horn
10. Mirror
11. Steering
12. Brakes
13. Tires

Texas Law requires the following equipment on **Mopeds**

1. Brake
2. Reflector
3. Head Lamp
4. Rear Lamp



Photo courtesy AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

These are just minimum requirements. To survive in traffic, you should have a mirror on each side. It is also a good idea to have additional reflectors on the motorcycle.

Helmets and Passengers

Helmets meeting the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard #218 (FMVSS-218) are required for motorcycle operators and passengers. Persons at least 21 years old are exempt from wearing a helmet if they have completed a DPS approved motorcycle operator training course or they are covered with at least \$10,000 in medical insurance. Persons operating or riding upon a motorcycle with a helmet exemption sticker displayed are presumed to meet the helmet exemption requirements.

Helmets should also:

- Fit snugly
- Be securely fastened when riding
- Be free of defects such as cracks, loose padding, frayed straps, or exposed metal.

A motorcycle operator cannot carry a passenger unless the motorcycle is equipped with a permanent passenger seat.

Licensing and Operation

Adult Motorcycle Operator Licensing

The operator of a motorcycle on a public roadway must hold a valid Texas DPS motorcycle license (Class M Driver License). This requirement also applies to operators of scooters.

To receive a license to operate a motorcycle, applicants must pass a written test covering traffic laws pertaining to

motorcycles, and a road test. The road test may be waived.

Road Test and Waiver Information

In order to take a road test, applicants must have their own motorcycle and provide a passenger vehicle and a licensed driver to transport the examiner during the road test. The vehicle owners must show proof of liability insurance for both vehicles and must pass an on-site safety inspection.

An applicant who has passed a DPS approved basic motorcycle operator training course, and has an unrestricted (not an instructional permit) class A, B, or C license, can present an MSB-8 completion certificate and receive a waiver of the road test.

Mopeds

The operator of a moped must hold a valid DPS license as a moped operator (Class M driver license with a restriction code of “K”). A moped is defined as a motor driven cycle that cannot exceed 30 mph, does not have an engine larger than 50cc, and does not have manual gear shifting. Applicants for a moped operator’s license must be at least 15 years old. The licensing requirements involve a written examination on traffic laws that apply to the operation of mopeds. No road test involving the operation of a moped is required.

Registration

Every owner of a motor vehicle, including motorcycles, motor scooters, and mopeds that will be ridden on public roadways, must register their vehicle through the County Tax Collector in their county of residence. A license plate must be attached to the rear of the vehicle, and must include a sticker showing current registration.

Inspection

All motor vehicles registered in Texas, including motorcycles, motor scooters, and mopeds, must be inspected each year at an official motor vehicle inspection station. When the motorcycle passes inspection, an approved certificate must be placed near the rear license plate. These certificates are good for one year from the month of inspection.

Insurance

All motor vehicle operators must show proof of liability insurance when the vehicle is registered or inspected, or when getting an operator license.

Be Road Ready

Studies indicate that in crashes, motorcycle riders and passengers are more likely to be seriously injured or killed than automobile operators or passengers. Your chance of reaching your destination safely is directly related to the preparation you do before the ride. You need to mentally prepare by being alert, free of stress, sober, and ready for riding.

Head Protection

A helmet protects you against head injury, windblast, cold, sunburn, flying objects, and hearing loss. Head injuries account for the majority of motorcycle fatalities. Without a helmet, you are five times more likely to sustain a critical head injury in a crash.

Eye Protection

Eyeglasses with shatterproof lenses protect the eyes but most styles do not seal out the wind that makes your eyes water. Goggles provide eye protection and most models protect your eyes from the wind. A motorcycle windshield or fairing alone is not adequate for eye protection. Eye protection should:

- Be shatterproof
- Be securely fastened
- Be optically clear
- Resist impact and penetration
- Not block peripheral vision

Protective Clothing

The clothes you wear when riding a motorcycle should protect you from sunburn, windburn, rain, dehydration, cold, and parts of the motorcycle, and provide visibility and comfort. In case of a crash, quality riding clothes may prevent or reduce the severity of cuts, abrasions, and bodily injury. Quality riding clothes consist of:

- Low-heeled footwear that covers the ankle with no dangling laces or rings and provides a good grip on the road surface and footpegs.
- Gloves that protect the hands from cuts and bruises, blisters, cold, wind, and provide better grip for control.
- Brightly colored long-sleeved shirt or jacket and long pants that will resist abrasions and fit comfortably without binding.
- Rain suits are recommended in rainy weather.

Face Shields

Any motorcyclist who has been hit in the face by a stone or an insect while riding can tell you about the benefits of face protection. Studies indicate that motorcycle riders with shields covering their faces suffer fewer facial injuries than others without a shield. A face shield should:

- Be securely fastened to the helmet and be free of scratches.
- Resist impact and penetration.

The Texas Department of Insurance, Texas Workers' Compensation encourages everyone — to practice these techniques to make motorcycling safer for everyone. On today's roadways, there are large numbers of motorcycle riders and even larger numbers of motor vehicle drivers who do not understand how to safety mix traffic. This lack

of knowledge has resulted in an increase of motorcycle-related crashes. The key to safety is motor vehicle drivers understanding and learning how to share the roadway with motorcycles.

Watch Aggressively for Motorcycles

- Search the traffic around you constantly and expect to see motorcycles.
- Check your blind spots before changing lanes or merging, especially in heavy traffic.
- Double-check traffic at intersections before you turn or pull out.
- Motorcycles can easily be hidden in traffic. Look for a helmet above, tires below, or a shadow alongside a vehicle that you can't see around.
- Anticipate hazards that may confront the motorcyclist and predict how the motorcyclist may react to the situation.
- Poor road conditions, bad weather, flying debris, oil slicks, and heavy traffic pose high risks for motorcyclists.
- Allow a minimum two-second "space cushion" when following a motorcycle.
- Pick out a fixed object ahead of you. When the motorcycle passes the object, count off, "one thousand one, thousand two." If you haven't passed the same object after two seconds, your following distance meets the two-second minimum.
- In poor driving conditions, at higher speeds and at night, use a four or five-second following distance to give the motorcyclist more space.

Watch Out when Turning Left

Most crashes between cars and motorcycles involve turning left at an intersection. If you are preparing to cross traffic or turn left, take a second look for motorcycles.

Because motorcycles are smaller than cars, it is harder to see them and more difficult to judge their approach speed in traffic.

Share the Road

Do not drive your car beside a motorcycle in the same lane. It is unsafe and illegal.

Treat motorcyclists with the same respect and courtesy you afford to other motorists.

Observe and Obey All Traffic Laws, Signs, and Signals

- Failure to obey and yield the right-of-way can result in the death or serious injury of a motorcyclist.
- Stay focused on the driving task. Inattentive driving is a major cause of car-motorcycle crashes.
- Use turn signals to indicate your next move. This allows the motorcyclist to anticipate traffic flow and find a safe lane position.

- Remove all possible distractions that can interfere with the driver’s attention, and remove any objects that may block the driver’s view.

Motorcycle Riding Safety Tips

- Whenever you ride always wear your proper riding gear which includes a helmet (DOT approved or better), eye protection (face shield, goggles or shatter resistant full coverage glasses), long sleeved shirt or jacket, full fingered gloves, long pants (denim or leather), and over the ankle boots or sturdy shoes with non skid soles. You’ll be more comfortable, safer and ultimately enjoy riding even more.
- At night, be careful not to override your motorcycle’s headlight. And take extra care to be seen by other drivers by wearing reflective clothing and using reflective tape and decals.

In addition to the pre-ride inspection you should know how to do minor maintenance and service on your motorcycle, especially important on long rides and trips. Be sure to read your owner’s manual and follow the directions. When you brake, use both brakes together. Generally speaking, when conditions are good, the front brake accounts for as much as 2/3 of the bike’s stopping power. How much brake pressure to use depends on your abilities, you bike’s capabilities, and the environment.

Slow down before going into a curve. Look through the curve and gently accelerate as you enter and drive through the curve. This gentle acceleration creates stability but cannot be accomplished without the proper braking prior to entering the curve, mud, sand, water and other foreign debris on the road take special handling. Before reaching a slippery surface, slow down and avoid directional or speed changes as you ride through the hazard.

Remember that the first few minutes of a rainstorm are the most dangerous as the water mixes with the oil and fluids on the roadway. Avoid riding during this time, if possible. If you must ride try to ride in the tracks of the other vehicles in front of you as they force away the water and oils.

Standing on the pegs can help you keep control of your cycle when riding over obstacles or rough surfaces. Keep your knees and elbows bent, look past the hazard in the direction you want to go and maintain a steady speed.

Always plan ahead — you never know what kind of problems may be coming up. Know what you’ll have to do if you suddenly skid, have a blowout, or loose clutch or throttle control.

- Riding with a passenger makes balance and control of your bike a great challenge. Make sure your passenger is wearing all of the proper riding gear, knows where and

how to sit, where to put their feet and hands and how to lean through turns. Tell them to look over your shoulder in the direction of the turn. Remember that the passenger is “your” responsibility and should be properly educated, prepared and ready to ride.

- Never ride if you have consumed any alcohol, drugs, prescriptions, or otherwise. Your best weapon on the bike, your judgment, becomes impaired and your reaction time is slowed.
- When you carry loads, be sure to fasten them securely to the motorcycle and keep the heavier objects low and towards the center of gravity of the bike. Never secure loads where they will affect your steering, handling, or sight of the road ahead.

For more information regarding Motorcycle Safety, please contact the Texas Motorcycle Safety Bureau, Texas Department of Public Safety, 5805 N. Lamar Blvd., Box 4087, Austin, Texas 78773-0257, 512/424-2021 or 1/800/292-5787,

Email: motorcycle.safety@txdps.state.tx.us.

The information in this training program was produced in cooperation with the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center, and the Division of Workers’ Compensation and is considered factual at development.

Review Questions

1. What are three ways to be sure your motorcycle won’t let you down?
2. Motorcycle helmets must meet what Federal Standard?
3. What type of operator license must an adult have to ride on a Texas public roadway?
4. How often must a motor vehicle be registered and inspected in Texas for operation on a Texas public roadway?
5. Why is it important to wear a face shield with the motorcycle helmet?

Answers:

1.
 - a) Make sure you have the right equipment to begin with.
 - b) Keep your motorcycle in safe riding condition.
 - c) Avoid adding accessories or making modifications that make your motorcycle harder to handle.
2. Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard #218 (FMVSS-218)
3. The operator of a motorcycle on a public roadway must hold a valid Texas DPS motorcycle license (Class M Driver License). This requirement also applies to operators of scooters.
4. All motor vehicles must be registered and inspected annually in Texas.
5. Any motorcyclist who has been hit in the face by a stone or an insect while riding can tell you about the benefits of face protection. Studies indicate that motorcycle riders with shields covering their faces suffer fewer facial injuries than others without a shield.

Resources

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI, DWC) Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety video/DVD library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at <http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>.

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