

MOTORCYCLES AND MOPEDS

SHARING THE ROAD WITH MOTORCYCLES

ERNIE BERTOTHY: Welcome to the DMV Infocast, an audio production of the State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. This is Ernie Bertothy, Infocast editor. With us today is **Linda Dagesse**, a licensing agent in the DMV's Branch Operations Division. Linda is here today to discuss a list of facts compiled by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for all motorists to remember when riding a motorcycle or driving your motorcycle.

ERNIE BERTOTHY: Well, Linda, thank you very much for joining us today to talk about motorcycle safety. Recently the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration compiled a list of facts for all motorists to remember when they're riding a motorcycle or driving near a motorcycle, and we're going to run through some of these facts here and just kind of hash out what they're talking about and kind of elaborate on some of these points that are very important to safety.

The first one is that motorcycles are vehicles with the same rights and privileges as any vehicle on the road. This is certainly true, isn't it?

LINDA DAGESSE: This is correct, yes.

ERNIE: Allow the motorcycle a full lane width. Although it may seem as though there is enough room in the traffic lane for an automobile and a motorcycle, remember the motorcycle needs room to maneuver safely. Is that something that is common on the roadway that some of these people take for granted?

LINDA: And it's important to remember because motorcycles don't always ride in the center of their lane because of road conditions, so sometimes they may be to the right or the left of the center, but it's still their lane.

ERNIE: And I found this one to be interesting. Approximately one half of all motorcycle crashes involved another motor vehicle and nearly 40% were caused by another

vehicle turning left in front of a motorcycle. That's probably one of the most common ways you can crash.

LINDA: A lot of the reason for that is that the public doesn't always see the motorcycle. They are small and they don't seem to be moving as fast as they are so they don't see them.

ERNIE: And that kind of piggy-backs on to the next point, Linda, that motorcycles have a much smaller profile than vehicles which can make it more difficult to judge the speed and distance of an approaching vehicle.

LINDA: That's correct. And sometimes in traffic, and you're looking for other vehicles coming, the motorcycle is so small you might miss it because you're used to looking for something the size of another car or a truck.

ERNIE: The next point involves a signal light. Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows the motorcyclist to anticipate traffic flow and find a safe lane position. This is something you should always remember, isn't it?

LINDA: Yes. When you're driving, and especially if you're riding a motorcycle and you see the vehicle next to you with a signal light on, you can make sure they're not going to pull into your lane in case they don't see you so you could hold back a little. Definitely signals are extremely important.

ERNIE: And speaking also of visibility, you should always remember that motorcyclists are often hidden in a vehicle's blind spot or missed in a quick look due to their smaller size. So you should always make a visual check for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and an intersection. So blind spots certainly play a role in safety.

LINDA: And in our driver's manual, it talks about checking over your shoulder always before you change lanes. A quick second before you move, check your blind spots.

ERNIE: And also relating to traffic signals, don't be fooled by a flashing turn signal on a motorcycle. Motorcycle signals usually are not self-canceling and riders sometimes forget to turn them off. You should way to be sure the motorcycle is going to turn

before you proceed. That's an interesting fact that probably a lot of people don't realize if they don't ride motorcycles.

LINDA: That's correct. It's very often that motorcyclists have been driving cars for years and they're used to self-canceling so they do forget to cancel a right or left-turn signal, definitely.

ERNIE: And another thing that probably most people who don't ride motorcycles don't realize is that you should remember that road conditions, which are minor annoyances to you driving a vehicle, pose major hazards to motorcyclists. Motorcyclists may change speed or adjust their position within a lane suddenly in reaction to road or traffic conditions such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, grooved pavement, you name it. These are things that aren't a big deal to me driving my car but are certainly a big deal to somebody on a motorcycle.

LINDA: Yes, they definitely are. There could be objects on the road, and motorcycles are going to react differently certainly than someone driving a car. And there's a lot of people now that have learners permits that haven't gotten their actual motorcycle license yet and they're beginners, so certainly they're going to be a lot more careful than somebody else on the road, so you should watch out for those guys. You don't know if they're a beginner also.

ERNIE: Always allow for more following distance, 3 or 4 seconds, following the motorcycle so the motorcyclist has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. In dry conditions, motorcycles can stop more quickly than a car.

LINDA: Much more quickly than a car. So you don't want to be right on their tail if they stop really quickly.

ERNIE: So from a driver of a vehicle's perspective, certainly there are a lot of things you have to consider when you're driving around a motorcycle that most people don't realize.

LINDA: You should just keep your eye on a motorcycle. Let them know that you're there. Watch out, they're going to stop quicker. They could change lane position a lot

quicker. They could be beginner riders that are out practicing to come for their test, so you should be careful.

ERNIE: Linda, very good advice. Thank you very much for joining us today to talk about motorcycle safety.

LINDA: Thanks. It's been fun.

ERNIE BERTOTHY: I'm Ernie Bertothy, Infocast editor, and you've been listening to an Infocast produced by the State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. Thank you for listening.