



New Mexico DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Michael R. Sandoval, Cabinet Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May is Motorcycle Awareness Month *NMDOT reminds motorists to ‘Get up to Speed on Motorcycles’*

SANTA FE – The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is partnering with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) to remind all motorists to *Get Up to Speed on Motorcycles* during Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month this May.

While on the roads, motorists may encounter motorcyclist behaviors that seem out of sync with standard vehicle use. NHTSA designed this campaign to help motorists understand standard motorcycle driving behaviors and learn how to drive safely around motorcycles on our roadways. The campaign brings drivers up to speed on common motorcyclist riding behaviors and highlights simple things drivers can do to increase the safety of their two-wheeled friends who have very little protection in the event of a multi-vehicle crash.

“We want vehicle drivers to learn more about interacting with motorcyclists, keep an eye out for them, and always remember to share the road,” said Transportation Secretary Mike Sandoval. “Raising awareness of motorcyclist presence and providing information to better understand their maneuvers can save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce crashes.”

Unfortunately, motorcyclists are significantly underrepresented in traffic crashes and fatalities each year. In fact, per vehicle miles traveled, motorcyclists are about 29 times more likely than passenger vehicle occupants to die in a motor vehicle crash and are 4 times more likely to be injured. It is essential vehicle drivers pay complete attention on the roads: Even the smallest momentary lapse in a driver’s awareness can result in the death of an unseen motorcyclist.

In 2019, there were 1,128 motorcycle crashes in New Mexico; 59 were fatal. That is the highest number of motorcycle fatalities since 2014. Alcohol and or drugs were involved in 29 of the fatalities.

“Riding sober and wearing a DOT-compliant helmet is imperative to the safety of our riders,” said Sandoval. “Just like motorists buckling their seat belts, using a DOT-compliant helmet can drastically increase survival rates in the event of a vehicle crash.”

- Learn how to identify a safe, DOT-compliant helmet by visiting <https://www.nhtsa.gov/motorcycle-safety/choose-right-motorcycle-helmet>.

Tips for Motorists

Because vehicle drivers control a much larger machine, it is imperative they keep close watch for motorcyclist and follow these tips to prevent a fatal crash with a motorcycle:

- Though a motorcycle is a small vehicle, its operator still has the same rights of the road as any other motorist. Always allow the motorcycle the full width of a lane.
- Always use a turn signal when changing lanes or merging with traffic.
- If you see a motorcycle with a signal on, be careful: motorcycle signals are often non-canceling, and the motorcyclist could have forgotten to turn it off. Always ensure the motorcycle is turning before proceeding.
- Check all mirrors and blind spots for motorcycles before changing lanes or merging with traffic, especially at intersections.
- Always allow three to four seconds of follow distance behind a motorcycle. This gives them more time to maneuver or stop in an emergency.
- Never drive distracted or impaired.

Tips for Motorcyclists

At the same time, motorcyclists must take extra precautions to guard against drivers who may not see them. Motorcyclists may follow these tips to prevent a fatal crash with a vehicle:

- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet and other protective gear.
- Obey all traffic laws and be properly licensed.
- Use hand and turn signals at every lane change or turn.
- Wear brightly colored clothes and reflective tape to increase visibility.
- Ride in the middle of the lane where you will be more visible to drivers.
- Never ride distracted or impaired.

As May nears, remember to *Get Up to Speed on Motorcycles* and vehicle drivers alike. For more information on motorcycle safety, visit www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/motorcycles.

To legally operate a motorcycle on a New Mexico highway a driver must have a valid license with a motorcycle endorsement.

New Mexico requires you to pass a 50 multiple-choice question knowledge test as part of a required Motorcycle Safety Foundation Basic Rider Course if you are under 18. To sign up for a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) Basic Rider Course (BRC) (successful completion waives both the MVD written and skills testing), visit the website at: <https://www.nm-msp.org/> or you can call 505-312-8430 or 877-667-8880.

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NMDOT
Mobility for everyone

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