

# Motorcycles, an Instrument of Death

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## Abstract

Motorcycles have been around for over one-hundred years, and still the amount of fatalities from motorcycle accidents increase every year. Motorcycles are extremely too dangerous and should be banned. They are dangerous for many reasons. One reason is the amount of noise produced by motorcycles. The sounds that emit from the engine of a motorcycle can cause permanent hearing loss after only a short period of time. Another reason motorcycles are hazardous is because they are not equipped with any safety devices. Some motorcycles don't even have turning signals. The speed capabilities of a motorcycle are asinine, and another prime example of how dangerous they are. Several manufactures build motorcycles to travel well over 180 miles per hour. Motorcycles are a very dangerous machine and need to be outlawed. The increasing amount of deaths from motorcycles is a big sign that the United States needs to take action. The only solution is to follow the example set by some foreign countries and file a bill to ban motorcycles on all roadways.

## Motorcycles, an Instrument of Death

Motorcycles fatalities have been on the rise since 1975, which is the year the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) started keeping record of traffic accidents. Every year more motorcycles are on the road and more people are dying from them. According to the NHTSA, in 1975 over three-thousand people died from motorcycle accidents. In 2008, there were over five-thousand fatalities from motorcycles. Today there are over seven-million registered motorcycles traveling on the roadways in the United States. Comparing those numbers with the five-million registered motorcycles back in 1975, it seems the more motorcycles that are on the road, the more people die from them (Nation Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA], 2008). With the death toll from motorcycles rising every year in the United States, something needs to be done. Foreign countries are recognizing that motorcycles are too dangerous for roadways and have started taking action. A bill was filed by two congressmen trying to outlaw motorcycles on major roadways to reduce and eliminate motorcycle accidents.

House Bill 3080 was filed by Alliance for Rural Concerns Party Representative Narciso D. Santiago III and Marikina Representative Marcelino R. Teodoro. In a press statement, Mr. Santiago said the World Health Organization reported that in many countries in Asia, including the Philippines, deaths and injuries from motorcycle accidents are now considered a public health epidemic. "Nearly 1.2 million people die of road traffic accidents every year, forty percent of which involve under 25-year-olds." Mr. Santiago said. ("Bill", 2008)

These congressmen have the right idea and I believe the United States should follow their example. Motorcycles are too dangerous and should be banned because the amount of noise they make, the safety features they lack, and the speeds they are capable of.

Motorcycles were invented right before the turn in to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After only a short period of time manufactures were using them to race. The following information was collected from the Encyclopedia Britannica:

By 1900 many manufacturers were converting bicycles—or pedal cycles, as they were sometimes called—by adding small, centrally mounted spark ignition engines. The need for reliable constructions led to road motorcycle trial tests and competition between manufacturers. The original Tourist Trophy motorcycle races were held on the Isle of Man in 1907 as reliability or endurance races. (“Motorcycle”, 2010)

It is quite apparent that motorcycles were never intended to be used for transportation, but strictly entertainment purposes only.

Motorcycles are dangerous for many reasons. One reason motorcycles are dangerous is the amount of noise they produce. They are so loud audiologists are concerned for the well being of the operators.

In a pilot test of 33 motorcycles, University of Florida (UF) audiologists at the College of Public Health and Health Professions have found nearly half produced sounds above 100 decibels when throttled up, [which is] equivalent in intensity to a loud rock concert or a chainsaw. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health cautions that exposure to noise at 100 decibels is safe for only 15 minutes. Permanent hearing loss can occur with prolonged exposure to any noise measuring 85 decibels or above. "Almost all of the motorcycles we tested reached action-level noise, which in the workplace would require ear protection," said Joy Colle, one of the study's researchers. "The loudest bike we tested measured 119 decibels with the engine revved, and the recommended exposure time at that level is only 11 seconds." (“Audiologists”, 2004)

Just riding a motorcycle for a short period of time is hazardous to a rider's health, even if that rider doesn't get into an accident, which is a good example of how dangerous motorcycles can be.

Another reason motorcycles are too dangerous is their lack of safety devices. Unlike cars, there are no safety devices built in to motorcycles. Cars are equipped seat belts and airbags, whereas motorcycles are equipped with neither. Some motorcycles are not even equipped with turning signals, which is an important safety feature. The only safety feature that motorcycles require is wearing a helmet, which is not required in all fifty states. A study done in 2003 by the Nation Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) suggest that out of the 3,592 motorcycle fatalities in 2003, fifty-two percent of those victims were not wearing a helmet. The NHTSA also suggests that helmets provide only a thirty-seven percent effectiveness in preventing fatalities. In other words, if a motorcyclist is wearing a helmet and crashes, his or her chance of survival only increases by a little more than one-third. Even if the one safety device is worn, motorcycles are still extremely too dangerous for those who value there life (NHTSA, 2004).

Another danger motorcycles provide are their speed capabilities. There are many different types of motorcycles, all capable of going over 100 miles per hour. Why would manufactures design motorcycles to go that fast when 70 miles per hour is the highest posted speed limit in the United States? Sport bikes are capable of reaching speeds over 180 miles per hour, and can go 0 to 60 in 2.5 seconds. That's twice as fast as sport cars. USA Today questioned Suzuki spokesman Glenn Hanson about the speed capabilities of their bikes, and why would Suzuki design motorcycles to go so fast. His response was, "Just because it's fast doesn't mean it's unsafe." (Thomas, 2007) Glenn Hanson's statement couldn't be more untrue. According to

the Nation Highway Traffic Safety Administration, speeding is one of the leading causes of motorcycle accidents. Over one fifth of all motorcycle accidents are from exceeding the speed limit. In 2008, the total number of deaths from motorcycle accidents is 5,290. Over 1,000 people died in 2008 from speeding on a motorcycle. It is not necessary for these machines to travel as such high speeds, and because of those speeds that motorcycles are capable of, thousands of people are not here with us today. A motorcycle's speed is just another prime example of how dangerous they are (NHTSA 2008).

Despite the efforts in motorcycle safety training and advertising safety on television, the number of motorcycle accidents is not in the motorcyclists' favor. Motorcyclists claim the reason for their dramatic increase of accidents is due to other motorists on the road. Motorcyclists' claim virtually two thirds of all accidents involving a motorcycle and another motor vehicle are a direct result of a motorist in the car turning into the lane of a motorcycle and violating the motorcyclist's right of way. Dave Wendell, program manager for Evergreen Motorcycle Safety Training in Seattle said, "Car drivers don't see us because they're not looking for us. They're looking for something at least 6 feet wide with two headlights" (Jones, 2002). Motorcycles are small in comparison with other vehicles driving on the road, therefore hard to see. The rearview and side mirrors can only help you see bigger objects. It can be really easy for a motorcycle to be in someone's blind spot. The biker's rebuttal to why there are so many motorcycle accidents on the road is a good one. The NHTSA funded one of the most extensive studies done on motorcycle safety and the results were surprising. "Looking at 4,500 accidents in Los Angeles, researchers found that when motorcycles and other vehicles collided, it is usually the driver in the car who violated the motorcyclist's right of way" (Jones, 2002). While driving from point A to point B, the operators of motor vehicles have enough hazards on the roadways to deal with.

Adding a small, speedy motorcycle, zipping in and out of traffic, in to the mix, is a recipe for disaster. Even though other vehicles on the roads are one of the main reasons for motorcycle accidents, motorcyclists are partially to blame. There are safety measures that could be taken so they could be more visible. Dave Wendell has made suggestions on how to accomplish that goal. He said:

Wearing white, orange and yellow are the most visible colors, but the average motorcycle rider wears black. My recommendation is to wear a reflective vest and to install a headlight modulator, which pulsates light. Since I did these two things, I've noticed a significant reduction in the number of cars turning left in front of me. (Jones, 2002)

It's always easier to point the blame at someone else and not accept responsibility. Motorcyclists should take responsibility, and accept the fact that they are partially at fault for other drivers not seeing them.

It always takes a big event before people start reacting. Motorcycle accidents are in the news all the time, but when a NFL football player gets in a motorcycle accident people start reacting. Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger got into a motorcycle accident four years ago and the Minnesota Vikings started considering implementing a clause in their contract to ban players from riding motorcycles. While the clause never became active, it took someone famous to crash on a motorcycle before action was considered (Jenson, 2006). How many more people need to lose their lives before America starts reacting? What is it going to take for our congressmen to fill a bill to ban motorcycles? Do the motorcycle fatality rates have to be considered a public health epidemic before action is taken? The longer the United States waits to take action, the more people that die. Motorcycles are not a necessity and should be banned.

They are too loud, they don't have any good safety features, and they are too fast. The only thing motorcycles are good for is killing people.

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