



**PROPER TRAINING:  
THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST  
MOTORCYCLE CRASHES**



## Surviving on a Motorcycle

Motorcycles are fun, exhilarating and an economical means of transportation. A big drawback, however, is limited protection from both inclement weather and other motorists. Sharing the road with other motorists is the greatest danger for a motorcyclist. Survival is the goal, and there are many ways to increase the odds.

## Proper Training

Obtain a motorcycle license before operating a motorcycle. No matter how much experience you have, there is always room to be better and safer. **Driver Improvement** programs increase your knowledge of road safety, while **Basic Driver** courses teach the newest safety techniques, technologies and recommended equipment. Learning is only the first step – **PRACTICE** is necessary to reach the goals of safety and reduce risk, and **TRAINING** is highly recommended for all motorcyclists.

Statistically, those who are new – or newly returning – are at the highest risk of crash involvement. Training for these groups is critical.

## Proper Clothing & Equipment

### *Helmet, helmet, helmet*

Always wear a Department of Transportation-approved helmet – it's the law in New Jersey. Statistics have shown that helmet use increases chances of survival by approximately 37 percent for operators and 41 percent for passengers. New helmets are lighter and more comfortable than ever, and studies show that helmets do not significantly diminish sight and hearing ability. Simply put, the pros outweigh the cons.

### *Protective clothing is key*

To be ready to ride, make sure you're dressed to ride. Motorcycle riding gear includes:

- Eye protection
- A jacket made of heavy material (leather) or a long-sleeve shirt (even in the summer)
- Pants made from denim, leather or other sturdy cloth
- Boots (no heels)
- Full-fingered gloves

### *Motorcycle pre-check*

Safety cannot be achieved if the motorcycle is unsafe. Before each ride, do a safety inspection that includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Tires, wheels and spokes (*if equipped*)
- Brakes, both front and rear
- Chain, belt and drive shaft
- Lights, brake lights and blinkers
- Hoses, cables and mirrors
- Fuel, other fluids and all components



## Follow the law

The safest behavior for all drivers is for everyone on the road to obey all traffic controls. For a motorcyclist, this is **imperative**.

The laws – as they pertain to the right-of-way – are for all road users. The right-of-way can only be given by one driver to another. Sometimes this is not the case, even if it is required by law.

## A Motorcyclist's Golden Rules

1. Always give the right-of-way. Never take the right-of-way without confirmation that the other driver is giving it.
2. Communicate all intentions. Always use blinkers and/or turn signals.
3. Make eye contact with other operators who may interfere with your maneuver.
4. Never drive in-between or alongside stopped lanes of traffic.
5. Always be prepared for other road users to do the things that put you at the most risk.
6. Expect and plan for the worst.
7. Reduce risk everywhere you can.

## Five Basic Rules

### *First-come, first-served*

At a four-way stop, the driver that arrives first should be given the right-of-way to go first. If two vehicles arrive at the same time, the vehicle on the left must yield to the one on the right. If you are turning left, you must yield to all other motorists that are entering the intersection.

### *Drive on the right*

Motorists should always drive as far right as safely possible. Use the left side or lane for passing.

### *Approaching an intersection*

Use the lane or portion of lane that serves your destination. Start from the left, right or center lane, or portion of a lane that is closest to where you intend to go. Starting there, enter the lane that is closest to where you came from. In the case of turning lanes, stay in the inner or outer lane throughout the turn. Never change lanes mid-maneuver.

### *Yield*

In many situations, motorists must yield, including:

- When a yield sign is present;
- When entering or crossing a major road;
- When changing lanes;
- When an emergency vehicle approaches;
- When making a turn; and
- When pedestrians are present (*all motorists must stop and remain stopped for pedestrians in a crosswalk. In New Jersey, all intersections have crosswalks, even if they are not marked by lines or grids*).

### *Keep to the right*

Keep to the right side of the roadway unless on a one-way street, passing another vehicle, or if it is not safe or reasonable to do so. When passing another vehicle, move to the left of that vehicle. Never pass on the right, except under the following conditions:

- When you are traveling in another marked lane (*on a multiple lane road*)
- When vehicle(s) are at a complete stop to turn left and there is room to do so safely

Motorcyclists must take extreme caution. Drivers often change their minds. **Expect the unexpected.** Passing on the right is a contributing factor in many crashes that result in injuries and death. Motorists making a right turn do not expect to see other vehicles passing or traveling on their right. They may turn into the path of a motorcyclist that is intending to go straight ahead.

Motorcycles are hard to see when operating in their own lane, and nearly impossible to see on the right. Adjust speed and distance to keep open space to the left as much as possible. This will allow room to maneuver and help avoid driving into another vehicle's blind spots.

## Think Ahead

All road users, especially motorcyclists, must anticipate what other road users might do. Using a visual lead of 20 to 30 seconds can help identify possible hazards ahead. Pay attention to signs that might indicate what another driver is planning. For instance, a motorist stopped at a light with the wheels turned slightly could signal an indication to turn when the light changes, even if they are not displaying a turn signal. A parked vehicle with brake or reverse lights on could indicate the operator is preparing to pull out into traffic or may open the door to exit.



## Think! Anticipate! Adapt!

A car door opening or a pedestrian stepping out between parked cars could result in disaster. It is important to leave four to five feet to the right to avoid the “door zone.” Road hazards like potholes, poor pavement or other road defects can force you to move or swerve. Riding in groups is safer when done in a staggered formation, rather than side-by-side.

## Keep Your Cool

When motorists say or do things in anger toward other road users, this is known as **road rage**. Drivers who exhibit signs of road rage are unpredictable and very dangerous. **Do not** engage these drivers – ignore them and do not make eye contact. **Keep calm and keep driving!** If the other driver continues to try to engage, drive to a safe area (*a police or fire station, shopping area or anywhere there are a lot of people*). **Do not drive home.**

## Always Think Safety

**Motorcyclists can follow these safety tips to prevent crashes and injuries:**

- Keep headlights, markers and taillights on at all times.
- Stay three to four seconds behind a vehicle you intend to pass, check oncoming traffic from the left side of the lane, signal the intention to turn and then check for oncoming traffic before passing.
- Check your rear-view mirror and quickly turn your head to ensure a vehicle is a safe distance behind when completing a pass.
- Wear helmets that meet a high protection standard.
- Wear proper clothing, eyewear and sturdy, closed-toe footwear.

**Motorists can make the road safer for motorcyclists by taking some simple precautions:**

- Be extra cautious on the weekends, when more motorcyclists take to the road.
- Provide motorcyclists adequate room to maneuver. Follow at least three to four seconds behind them.
- Allow extra maneuvering room in areas with potholes, pavement transitions and railroad crossings. Motorcyclists may need to slow down, stop or adjust their lane position.
- Never try to share a lane with a motorcycle. Motorcycles have the same right to lanes as any other vehicle.
- If a motorcycle is nearby, check your mirrors carefully before changing lanes. Motorcycles may be in your blind spots or difficult to see because of their smaller size.

## Training & Practice

To be good at a particular skill or task, there is no substitute for training and practice. Even professionals – those who are the best in the world at what they do – must train and practice to maintain their skills. The same is true for all motorcyclists. Continue to improve your skills each day as it increases the odds of survival.

### Become a Lifelong Learner!

To learn more about motorcycle training and locate a training facility, visit:

[www.njridesafe.org](http://www.njridesafe.org)



## Take the Pledge to Share the Road

Visit <http://NJSmartDrivers.org/PledgeWin> and fill out the pledge to Share the Road, which affirms your commitment to making our roads a safer place. You'll be entered to win prizes during our promotions throughout the year!

**"I pledge to help make NJ's roads safer for everyone and save lives by adopting the Share the Road driving tips, and to be respectful of motorcycle riders and all who Share the Road."**



## Resources

### AAA

AAA.com

### Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey

BIANJ.org

NJSmartDrivers.org

### Motorcycle Safety Foundation

msf-usa.org

### Motorcycle Safety | AAA Exchange

exchange.aaa.com/motorcycle-safety

### New Jersey Motorcycle Manual

www.state.nj.us/mvc/pdf/Licenses/mcm996.pdf

### "20 Tips on How to Survive Riding a Motorcycle" from the JAFRUM Motorcycle Blog

<http://bit.ly/1YdsBOI>

## Contact Information

### AAA Mid-Atlantic

700 Horizon Drive

Hamilton, NJ 08691

(609) 570-4132

*Atlantic, Burlington, Cape May, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex,  
Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset, Sussex & Warren Counties*

### AAA Northeast

1 Hanover Road

Florham Park, NJ 07932

(973) 245-4860

*Essex, Morris & Union Counties*

### AAA North Jersey

418 Hamburg Turnpike

Wayne, NJ 07470

(973) 956-2243

*Bergen, Hudson & Passaic Counties*

### AAA South Jersey

700 Laurel Oak Road

Voorhees, NJ 08043

(856) 679-2655

*Camden, Cumberland, Gloucester & Salem Counties*

### Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey

825 Georges Road

North Brunswick, NJ 08902

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**Brain Injury  
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