

With warm weather making a welcome return, the roads will soon be filled with motorcyclists enjoying the freedom of the open air. As amazing as it can be, riding motorcycles is still risky business. Whether you're a seasoned veteran or a new rider, we'll be giving you some safety tips to keep others and yourself safe on the road this summer.

According to the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, there are a few things you should do when you're preparing to ride:

1. Wear the right gear.
2. Become familiar with the motorcycle
3. Check the motorcycle equipment
4. Be a responsible rider

In this post, we'll cover the first point.

To begin, you must wear the right protective gear on the road. Now, what is "right" is determined by whether the gear protects you or not. In the Missouri Motorcycle Operator Manual (MMOM), it lists "a DOT-compliant helmet, face or eye protection, and protective clothing," as the things you will need to safely traverse the road.

1. Helmet

Some motorcyclists decide not to wear helmets, because they believe it impairs their peripheral vision. According to the MMOM, "A study of more than 900 motorcycle crashes, where 40% of the riders wore helmets, did not find even one case in which a helmet kept a rider from spotting danger." Case in point, wearing a helmet is imperative if you're riding a motorcycle. Your safety is too important.

If you look for helmets from the Snell Memorial Foundation, you'll be guaranteed good quality gear that meets DOT guidelines. If the helmet has loose straps, cracks, or faulty padding, look for another helmet. You'll want a helmet that fits snugly on your head. If you were to fall, the tighter fit will allow the helmet to absorb more of the force of the impact as opposed to a looser fitting helmet.

2. Face and Eye Protection

While riding down the road at high speeds, your face and eyes are especially susceptible to dirt, debris, and high powered winds. Impaired vision and distractions can throw off your balance and put you at severe risk on the road.

There are two options for you to protect your face and eyes. You could choose goggles, but you wouldn't be covering your whole face. It's recommended that you use a helmet with a built-in face shield. In the case of an accident, the face shield would protect your whole face and not just your eyes.

When picking your protective gear, the MMOM lists a few criteria for a good face shield. The face shield should be free of scratches and hard to penetrate. It must fasten securely to your helmet, with very little chance of it becoming unfastened. You also want to make sure that a little bit air can pass through the helmet. If not, your helmet can fog up and take away your vision.

3. Clothing

The right kind of clothing can protect you from extra harm during a crash, but must allow you to be comfortable as you ride. Firstly, you'll want a jacket and pants, which should cover your arms and legs from possible scratches. Make sure, though, that the clothes aren't baggy and blow in the wind. You want to be careful not to catch the wind too much, as it may throw off your balance. Synthetic clothing or jackets with "body armor" in vital spots are the most popular wear for riders.

Additional clothes you may need are protective gloves and hearing protection. Leather gloves will enhance your grip while riding and protect your hands in a crash. Ear plugs, while not required by law, will protect your hearing from the constant high winds and engine roars that you'll face on the road.

Now that you have all the protective gear you need, you're ready to hit the road. Tune in to our blog for more motorcycle safety tips as spring begins.

Missouri Motorcycle Operator Manual: <http://dor.mo.gov/forms/2332.pdf>