



New York Motorcycle Season Could Bring Another Increase in Rider Death Rate

NY lawyer Steven J. Schwartzapfel says motorcyclists and drivers need to focus on causes of rising fatal crashes involving two-wheeled motorists

New York, NY ([PRWEB](#)) June 13, 2010 -- New York attorney [Steven J. Schwartzapfel](#) says the most harrowing curve for motorcycle drivers is on a chart — the upward sweeping line that shows the trend in motorcycle fatalities.

"Motorcycle fatalities have been rising for more than a decade and have become the country's No. 1 highway traffic safety challenge," says Schwartzapfel, founding partner of [Schwartzapfel Truhowsky Marcus P.C.](#), a prominent New York law firm that concentrates in personal injury and auto accident litigation.

"Studies need to be undertaken, and their suggestions implemented," he said.

Early summer marks the start of another season of danger as more riders take to the road, he says. The upward trend in motorcycle accidents, injuries and fatalities will likely continue unless riders, law enforcement personnel and others make a concerted effort to reverse it, says Schwartzapfel, whose firm has handled many accidents involving motorcycles.

"The numbers are just too high to be accepted as part of a normal risk," Schwartzapfel says. "Clearly, everything from motorcycle safety equipment to highway design and the attitudes among motorcycle riders and those who share the road with them need to be examined."

Per vehicle mile, motorcyclists are about 37 percent more likely than passenger car occupants to die in a traffic crash, the National Center for Statistics and Analysis reports.

In the decade between 1998 and 2008, the latest national statistics available, the number of motorcyclists killed in the U.S. rose from 2,294 to 5,290. The rise reflects the growing popularity of motorcycle ownership, but even when adjusted to fatalities per registered motorcycles, the rate jumped 13 percent.

While those who climb aboard a motorcycle assume a greater risk, it is often the drivers of cars and trucks who create the danger, Schwartzapfel noted. For instance, 41 percent of fatal crashes in 2008 that involved a motorcycle and another type of vehicle occurred when the other vehicle was turning left and the motorcycle was going straight.

"Other drivers too often simply don't see a motorcycle coming," Schwartzapfel says. "It's a kind of blindness that driving instruction and continuing education need to target. Share the road and be aware of all other vehicles."

Schwartzapfel says the fault also lies with many motorcycle drivers who drink and drive. Often they are killed in

accidents that involve only their vehicle.

According to the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 43 percent of the 2,291 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2008 had blood alcohol concentrations above .08 percent, the point at which a driver is typically considered impaired. Sixty-four percent of those killed in single-vehicle crashes on weekend nights had levels of .08 or higher.

"Drivers of cars and trucks need to watch out for those on two wheels," Schwartzapfel says, "and motorcyclists need to do a better job of watching out for themselves. Their clubs and their peers need to emphasize safety. Law enforcement needs to make special efforts to make sure motorcyclists get the message."

Schwartzapfel shares these safety tips for drivers and motorcyclists:

- Always look for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and at intersections.
- Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic.
- Remember that road conditions that are minor annoyances to other vehicles pose major hazards to motorcyclists.
- Allow more distance when following a motorcycle so the motorcyclist has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency.
- A helmet is the most important safety equipment for a motorcyclist.

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