Motorcycle Helmet Research

Many studies have been conducted regarding motorcycle helmets. A summary of research studies was published in Safe Cycling (Motorcycle Safety Foundation, Winter 1998, Vol. 20, No. 3). When the evidence from these research studies are viewed as a whole, the conclusion is clear that helmets are very important and should be used to reduce the likelihood of head injury. The research also supports the lifesaving benefits of mandatory helmet laws.

Helmet Effectiveness

1. Helmet Effectiveness in Preventing Motorcycle Driver and Passenger Fatalities. L. Evans and M. C. Frick. General Motors R & D Center Safety Laboratory. October 1986. Helmets were 27 plus or minus 9 percent effective in preventing fatalities to motorcycle riders.


5. Injury Severity, Medical Costs and Associated Factors for Helmeted and Unhelmeted Motorcyclist Crash Cases Transported to Hospitals in Amarillo, Austin, Corpus Christi, and San Antonio, Texas. R. K. Goodnow. Texas Department of Public Safety. 1988. Four out of five motorcyclists studied who died were not wearing helmets.


8. Interim Report on Safety Belt and Motorcycle Helmet Effectiveness. United States General Accounting Office. May 1991. Helmeted riders experienced fatality rates that were 28% to 73% lower than unhelmeted riders.


11. Motorcycle Helmets–Medical Costs and the Law. N. E. McSwain and A. Bellis. Tulane University School of Medicine. October 1990. Average hospital stay for helmeted riders, 5.8 days; for unhelmeted, 11.8 days.


18. Fatal Injuries in Motorcycle Riders According to Helmet Use. S. Sarkar, C. Peek and J. Kraus. Southern California Injury Prevention Research Center. University of California. Los Angeles. February 1995. Cerebral injury, intracranial hemorrhage, face, skull vault, and cervical spine injuries were more likely to be found in fatally injured unhelmeted motorcyclists than in helmeted motorcyclists.


Effects of Helmet-Law Repeal


7. The Effects of Helmet-Law Repeal on Motorcycle Fatalities. Virginia A. de Wolf. National Technical Information Service. December 1986. The repeal was associated with a 10.4% to 33.3% increase in the fatality rate per accident.


Effects of Helmet-Law Introduction


3. The Impact of the Texas 1989 Motorcycle Helmet Law on Total and Head-Related Fatalities, Severe Injuries, and Overall Injuries. N. S. Fleming and E. R. Becker. Medical Care. September 1992. Declines: 12.6% for total fatalities, 57% for head-related fatalities, 13.1% for severe injuries, 12.3% for injuries overall, 52.9% for head-related injuries.
4. Injury Prevention Strategies to Promote Helmet Use Decrease Severe Head Injuries at a Level 1 Trauma Center. C. N. Mock, R. V. Maier, E. Boyle, S. Pitcher and F. P. Ivara. The Journal of Trauma. July 1995. **Mortality declined from 10% to 6%.**

Cost of Injuries Resulting from Motorcycle Crashes
1. *Cost of Injuries from Motorcycle Crashes: A Literature Review*. U.S. Department of Transportation. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. November 2002. **Only slightly more than half of motorcycle-crash victims have private health insurance coverage. The government pays a majority of medical costs for uninsured patients. Helmet use reduced the fatality rate, the probability and severity of head injuries, the necessity for special medical treatments, and the probability of long-term disability.**

Additional Helmet-Study Sources

The One (and Only) Study Often Referenced by Anti-Helmet-Law Groups

Michigan-Specific Research

The One Best and Most Recent Study