Sharing the Road with Motorcycles

Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about the subject of this reading?

Definitions: Fatality – a death that occurs suddenly or by accident
Blind spot – an area of the road that cannot be seen by looking forward or through side or rearview mirrors

Reading

We share the roads with many types of vehicles. Motorcycles are one of the most unique. They are unlike any other vehicle. While motorcycles are about as likely as cars to be involved in crashes, motorcyclists are almost three times as likely to be injured and five times more likely to be killed in a crash.

In recent years, motorcycling has become more popular. Motorcycles are fun and relatively inexpensive to own and insure. They also get excellent gas mileage. More motorcycles in traffic create a need for greater awareness among those who share the road.

Motorcycle crashes are on the rise. In Minnesota, the number of motorcycle crashes, injuries, and fatalities have risen about 37 percent since 1996. In many car-motorcycle crashes, drivers claimed they didn’t see the motorcycle, or didn’t see it until it was too late. Motorcycles are smaller and harder to see. Great care needs to be taken to watch for them.

Drivers should expect to see motorcycles at any time. A motorcycle’s headlight is on at all times. This helps them be seen during the day and night. However, a motorcycle can easily be hidden behind a car or truck. It’s important for a driver to check his/her mirrors and blind spot before merging or changing lanes. Look for a helmet above, tires below, or a shadow alongside a vehicle that you can’t see around.

Riders need to make themselves as conspicuous as possible. They need to be careful not to hide in traffic. It is recommended that riders maintain a large space cushion when following another vehicle and use their entire lane (right, left, and center) to see and be seen. Brightly colored protective gear and helmets help riders be more visible. Colors like, red, yellow, orange, and white help a rider be noticed. Some riders also use reflective tape and stickers.

Riders should use turn signals for every turn or lane change, even if they think no one will see it. Some use a combination of both hand signals and turn signals to draw more attention to themselves. Flashing the brake light two or three times before slowing down or stopping also helps drivers take notice.

All drivers and riders need to be alert and aware of who is sharing the road with them. This will result in safer roads and highways.

Source: Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center - Safety Tips

Level 7.0
Understanding

1. Why are motorcycles difficult to see? _________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

2. Why are they so popular? _____________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

3. How are motorcycles and cars similar? And, how are they different? _______________
   __________________________________________________________________________

4. What does it mean to be alert and aware? _______________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

5. How can motorcyclists be more visible? (List at least three ways.) __________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

6. How can drivers be more aware? (List at least two ways.) _________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

7. What does the word conspicuous mean? _________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: What is your experience with motorcycles? Do you ride one? If yes, how do you make sure people see you? Have you ever crashed or had a near-crash experience? What happened?

Option C: Write about how you safely share the road with others.