



As we begin a new year, I thought we'd re-visit the question some bikers are being asked consistently: Why do you ride without wearing a helmet?

I'm not going to try and tell you that *not* wearing a helmet while you ride offers the ultimate in safety. Wearing a helmet has its benefits. However, let's talk about some mostly unknown points, and bring them to light.

First, to simulate the impact a helmet experiences while your head is in it during a crash, the DOT requires helmet manufacturers to drop the helmets on an anvil at 4.7 MPH to 13.4 MPH.<sup>1</sup> Some of the research I've read even tries to sell the idea that if you're traveling at 67 MPH and crash, your head with a helmet on will finally impact somewhere at the equivalent of hitting an anvil at 11 MPH!<sup>2</sup> I think most of us are much more intelligent than that. Hell, I'm almost insulted at that assumption!

Since the government has spent years and so much money to convince us, the ones that actually ride, that helmets are the next best thing since sliced bread, consider this: helmets can offer a false sense of safety. Many will hate to admit it, but if they look deep inside, they'll admit that when they're riding with a helmet on, they possess a belief on some level that if they are involved in an accident, the helmet will keep them from harm. I know years ago when I laid my Kawasaki GPZ750 down at 55 MPH, I ended up with road rash. I was riding stupidly... I did have the feeling that the helmet would save the day. Yeah, I walked away from the accident. Not because the helmet saved my life... for a reason much simpler than that: my head never hit anything during the accident.

This conveniently brings me to my next point. For years we keep hearing that the majority of fatal motorcycle accidents involve bikers not wearing helmets. They never seem to break down the *type* of fatality that caused the tragedy, just that it involved a motorcycle, involved a death, and did not involve a motorcycle helmet. Therefore, a majority of the pro-helmet people have been hanging their hats on these statistics.

However, that ends now. In late 2008, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) reported that **"58% of motorcyclists and their passengers killed WERE wearing helmets"**. Specifically, the DHSMV further stated that of all the 2007 motorcycle-involved accidents in Florida, 57.39% of them resulted in an incapacitating injury in which the riders/"drivers" **were** wearing a helmet.<sup>3</sup> It appears the helmet wearers are now a MINORITY. Statistics no longer support the anti-helmet choice advocate's claims.

I don't wish to preach doom and gloom about the helmet/no-helmet issue. Safety aside, one thing does remain true: we live and ride in the United States of America. As legal adults, as the individuals riding the motorcycles, and as some may say; the ones putting *ourselves* at risk, we should have the right to make our own choice if we wish to wear a helmet or not. Helmet laws are simply another way for the government to tell grown men and women what to do.

Oh yeah, in case you're asked; this is not an issue tied to the seatbelt laws; those in cars don't have to pay extra for insurance to ride without a seatbelt. FL law requires us to hold a Personal Insurance Policy to ride without helmets.

Helmet use is a choice. ***Let those who ride decide.***

Until next month, keep the chrome side up,  
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<sup>1</sup> Federal DOT § 571.218 Standard No. 218; Motorcycle helmets

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motorcycle\\_helmet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motorcycle_helmet)

<sup>3</sup> FL DHSMV *Traffic Crash Statistics Reports 2007*, page 8 & 11