

KEEP THE THRILLS, AVOID THE SPILLS

As I finalize the editing for this month's article the weather is cool and wet (typical for "springtime in the Rockies"), but I know that warmer weather is coming soon. Like me, most of you are probably anxious to get outside and enjoy the beauty of Wyoming. While I prefer bicycling over motorcycling, this month I write to remind those riders, and the rest of us traveling Casper streets and Wyoming's highways, to be safe while enjoying the beauty of the open road.

The vision of riding a motorcycle with the wind blowing through your hair is an attractive one for many, and the number of motorcycles on the highways is growing. According to the Treasurer's office, there are nearly 5,000 motorcycles registered in Natrona County. Although motorcycles share the road with cars and trucks, and although they are subject to the same traffic laws as are other vehicles, the fact is that collisions involving motorcycles are different from, and often more serious than, automobile accidents.

The Stats

The number of motorcycle accidents has risen in proportion to all vehicular accidents, and motorcyclists are much more likely to be injured or killed in a collision than is someone riding in a car or truck. According to the NTSB, a motorcycle rider is 18 times more likely to die in a collision than is someone in a car, and far more likely to suffer serious injuries. In nearly half of all collisions involving motorcycles, the fault lay with the driver of the other vehicle, who failed to yield the right-of-way to the motorcycle.

Some 80% of motorcycle collisions result in serious injury or death, and the fact that the motorcyclist might not have been at fault is of little comfort. A common and serious injury associated with motorcycle accidents is traumatic brain injury. Since motorcyclists are often thrown off their bikes in a collision, such injuries are 10 times more common in motorcycle accidents than in other vehicle accidents.

Safety First

Studies have shown that the best way to prevent these injuries is also the most obvious — WEAR A HELMET! Motorcyclists should be sure the helmet they choose has been approved by

the Department of Transportation. If it has, it will have a sticker on it saying “DOT.” Heavy riding boots, gloves, vests, and long pants can also help protect riders if they do crash.

Motorcyclists should take extra care when riding and avoid the temptation to make unsafe maneuvers. They should drive safely and understand the special problems that their vehicles present for others on the road, and they should ride especially defensively.

However, motorcycle safety is a two-way street. As the weather warms, I urge you to “drive aware” and keep a careful eye out for motorcycles. Motorcycle riders have the right to use the same roads that car drivers do, and this right should be respected. Other vehicles should give motorcycles a wide berth—even a small tap from a car bumper could be fatal to a motorcyclist.