Motorcycle Helmet Law and Safety

Effect of Michigan's Helmet Law

April marks the fifth anniversary of Michigan's partial universal helmet law on motorcycle riders. This law, adopted in 2012, requires motorcycle riders to wear helmets while traveling in multiple lane highways or in a city with an annual population of 80,000 or less. The law, however, does not apply to motorcyclists on one-lane highways or during off-seasons.

The UM Injury Center team, which conducted the study, found that the law significantly reduced the number of Helmets among non-helmeted motorcyclists, while head injuries among hospitalized riders have not significantly increased. Although the statewide fatality rate did not significantly increase, the statewide impact of Michigan's partial universal helmet law on motorcycle helmet use, head injuries, and fatalities.

Members of the research team at the U-M Injury Center, in collaboration with several interdisciplinary centers housed at the U-M School of Public Health, prepared this research study examining state-wide helmet use among motorcyclists in Michigan. The team analyzed data collected by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on helmet use by road type, motorcycle class, and time of day, and compared the data before and after the partial helmet law repeal.

Key findings of the study:

- Helmet use increased among non-helmeted motorcyclists, while head injuries among hospitalized riders have not significantly increased.
- The statewide fatality rate did not increase.
- The statewide impact of Michigan's partial universal helmet law on motorcycle helmet use, head injuries, and fatalities.

The study highlights 2015 results from the National Occupant Protection Use Survey. The survey was conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration utilizing the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) database. The survey is administered to adults aged 18 years and older who reside in households in which English or Spanish is primarily spoken.

Economic Cost Information

Cost savings amounted to approximately $2.8 billion due to helmet use. This is a conservative estimate based on data from the National Safety Council (NSC) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The cost savings were calculated by multiplying the number of lives saved by the average cost of a fatality.

Research continues to show that motorcycle helmet use decreases the risk for a head injury and fatality following a motorcycle crash. This policy fact sheet is a resource practitioners, and policymakers can utilize in their injury prevention advocacy and policy efforts.

Member Highlight: Jenifer Martin, JD

Jenifer Martin is the Director of Government Relations at the U-M School of Public Health and the Co-Director of the U-M Injury Center. In addition to her public health advocacy and policy writing for students, faculty, and staff, she also oversees the Legislative Mobilization Program at the U-M School of Public Health. She works with several interdisciplinary centers housed at the U-M Injury Center which examined the statewide impact of Michigan's partial universal helmet law on motorcycle helmet use, head injuries, and fatalities.

Ms. Martin works with the U-M Injury Center to develop comprehensive materials for injury prevention advocacy and policy efforts. She is a member of the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) which presents a database with information on traffic safety bills introduced in the U.S. from 2007-2017. Traffic Safety Trends | State Legislative Action 2015

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