

## **Motorcycle Riding: Making it safe and enjoyable**

### **Motorcycle podcast script**

**January 31, 2008**

**Announcer:** A motorcycle can offer you freedom, excitement and a fun way to travel. However, operating a motorcycle requires extra concentration and additional training. Here with more information is Karen Chappell, deputy commissioner for the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles. Karen is also a trained motorcycle rider.

Karen, you've seen the sad statistics about motorcycle crashes -- more riders are dying on Virginia roads each year. Can you shed some light on why?

**Karen:** One reason is there are more motorcycles and more vehicles in general on the roads today than ever before, so that's going to contribute to an increase in fatalities. Individual rider behavior is the biggest issue -- things like reckless driving, failure to maintain control and riding above your ability.

**Announcer:** OK, so riders need to keep safety in mind all the time. What else does a motorcycle rider need to know before hitting the road?

**Karen:** Wearing protective clothing and a helmet is very important. A helmet is the most important safety equipment a motorcyclist wears. A rider with no helmet is about 40 percent more likely to suffer a fatal head injury than is a rider wearing a helmet.

**Announcer:** It sounds like wearing a helmet greatly improves a rider's chance of surviving a crash. What other gear should motorcyclists have?

**Karen:** Motorcycle riders must have the right eye protection and the right clothing and boots. I recommend choosing quality goggles or glasses with plastic or safety lenses, or a helmet with a face shield.

**Announcer:** And the right clothes can protect riders during a crash, too, correct?

**Karen:** That's correct. Clothing should provide some measure of protection from abrasion. It should be durable, such as leather, and jackets should be long sleeved. Wear long pants, not shorts, and they should not be baggy or flared at the bottom to prevent them from getting tangled up in your motorcycle. I wear durable, non-slip gloves so I can have a firm grip on the controls.

**Announcer:** I've heard what you wear on your feet is very important, too.

**Karen:** Yes, it protects your feet, ankles and lower legs. I think leather boots are the best. However, durable athletic shoes that cover your ankles are a good second choice. But, motorcyclists should avoid dangling laces that can get in their way.

**Announcer:** Now that we've bought all the right gear and clothes, can you give motorcycle riders some tips on how to be safe on the roads?

**Karen:** Sure. The way a motorcyclist positions the parts of his or her body is very important for a successful and safe ride. For example, you should sit far enough forward on your bike so that your arms are slightly bent when you hold the handlegrips. Bending your arms lets you turn the handlebars without having to stretch. Also, you should sit fairly erect, which lets your arms steer the motorcycle rather than holding you up.

**Announcer:** That makes sense. What about the rest of your body?

**Karen:** Keep your knees against the gas tank and your feet firmly on the footpegs. This will help you keep your balance when you execute turns. Don't drag your foot along the ground. If your foot catches on something, you could lose control of the motorcycle. Keep your feet near the controls so you can get to the controls fast when you need them.

**Announcer:** OK. You mentioned making turns. Is there anything we should remember about that?

**Karen:** New riders often try to take turns too fast. When they can't hold the turn, they end up crossing into another lane, going off the road, or they overreact and lose control. Until you learn to judge how fast you can safely take a curve, new riders should approach all turns with caution.

**Announcer:** That sounds like good advice. What's the right way to execute a turn?

**Karen:** Use your head and eyes for directional control. Look through the turn to where you want to go. The motorcycle must lean. In normal turns, the rider and motorcycle should lean together. In slow tight turns, lean the motorcycle only and keep your body straight. Roll on the throttle through the turn. Maintain a steady speed or gradually accelerate. Try not to slow down while in a turn.

**Announcer:** I'm sure even experienced riders could benefit from hearing that explanation. Now that we know how to turn safely, what about stopping?

**Karen:** Your motorcycle has two brakes. You need to use both of them. Some people believe that the rear brake should be applied first. That is not a good idea.

**Announcer:** What should riders keep in mind when they are out on the road? We're hearing a lot about driver and rider responsibility these days.

**Karen:** In crashes with motorcyclists, car drivers often say they never saw the motorcycle. It's hard to see something you're not looking for, and most drivers are not looking for motorcycles. One way to combat this problem is to wear reflective clothing, and make sure your lights and signals are working and use them. My motto is to treat other motorists with courtesy and respect. Being inconsiderate of other motorists creates a negative image for all riders, and can cause crashes.

**Announcer:** Is there anything specific you can tell us about being courteous and respectful?

**Karen:** Motorcycle riders should not tailgate, weave in and out of stalled traffic or ride on the road's shoulders. Every motorcyclist should know and obey traffic laws, including any ordinances in their communities that are specific to motorcycles.

**Announcer:** You've given us a lot of great information about motorcycle riders. Are there any thoughts you want to leave us with?

**Karen:** Safety is our top priority at DMV. Experience and knowledge are the keys to safe motorcycle riding. I want to emphasize the importance of completing a motorcycle training course. It could save your life and the lives of other motorists on the road.