Press Release

Greene County Public Health
A Safe Communities Grantee of Ohio Department of Public Safety
Ohio State Highway Patrol-Traffic Safety Division
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NHTSA and Greene County Safe Communities Remind Drivers and Riders That Motorcyclist Safety Is Everyone's Safety

XENIA, OH — This May, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is teaming up with the Greene County Safe Communities Coalition, part of Greene County Public Health, to remind all motorists that *Motorcyclist Safety Is Everyone's Safety*. May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, and the end of May ushers in the unofficial start of the summer road travel season. Safe riding and driving practices, and cooperation from all road users, will help reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our nation's highways.

Unfortunately, data shows that motorcyclists are often overrepresented in traffic crashes and fatalities each year, and that speed and alcohol are large contributing factors. Additionally, helmet use has drastically declined in the past few years, leaving motorcyclists vulnerable to injury and death. It's everyone's responsibility — both the motor vehicle driver and the motorcyclist — to practice safe habits on the road and, ultimately, to *Share the Road*.

According to NHTSA data, there were 5,579 motorcyclists killed in traffic crashes in 2020, an 11% increase from 2019 (5,044). Motorcyclist deaths accounted for 14% of the total highway fatalities in 2020. Sadly, motorcyclists are significantly overrepresented in traffic crashes and fatalities each year. In fact, in 2020, per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists were about 28 times more likely than passenger vehicle occupants to die in a motor vehicle crash and were 4 times more likely to be injured.

One of the primary contributing factors to motorcyclist fatalities is speeding. According to NHTSA, 34% of all motorcycle riders involved (killed or survived) in fatal crashes in 2020 were speeding, compared to 22% for passenger car drivers, 16% for light-truck drivers, and 7% for large-truck drivers. Motorcycle riders 25 to 29 years old involved in fatal crashes had the highest speeding involvement at 45%.

Alcohol impairment also plays a significant role in motorcycle-involved crash fatalities: 41% of the 2,158 motorcycle riders who died in single-vehicle crashes in 2020 were alcohol-impaired. In 2020, motorcycle riders involved (killed or survived) in fatal crashes had higher percentages of alcohol impairment than any other type of motor vehicle driver (27% for motorcycle riders, 23% for passenger car drivers, 19% for light-truck drivers, and 3% for large-truck drivers). Forty-five percent of those killed in single-vehicle crashes on weekends were alcohol-impaired, and those killed were almost three times more frequently found to be alcohol-impaired at night than during the day (40% and 14%, respectively).

Like seat belts, helmets are a simple and effective way to reduce the likelihood of injury or death during a crash. But helmet use has declined significantly in the past few years. The use of DOT-compliant motorcycle helmets declined from 69% in 2020 to 64.9% in 2021. Helmet use continued to be significantly higher in states that require all motorcyclists to be helmeted than in other states that do not. It's important to understand that both motorcyclists and their passengers should always wear a helmet. Helmet use among riders with passengers continued a sharp decrease at 52.1% in 2021, down from 65% in 2020 and 79.7% in 2019. In contrast, helmet use among passengers of riders wearing DOT-compliant helmets increased significantly from 84.5% in 2020 to 92.1% in 2021.

Safe driving and riding practices from all road users — drivers and riders alike — will help reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our nation's highways. Motor vehicle drivers and motorcyclists should keep the following tips in mind when on the road:

- Observe all traffic laws and always obey the speed limit.
- Drive and ride alcohol- and drug-free.
- Avoid distractions that place other road users at risk.
- Yield to motorcyclists, especially while turning at intersections.
- Wear high-visibility personal protective gear and DOT-compliant motorcycle helmets. NHTSA data estimates that helmets saved 1,872 motorcyclists' lives in 2017, and that 749 more lives could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn their helmets. Learn how to identify a safe, DOT-compliant helmet at www.nhtsa.gov/motorcycle-safety/choose-right-motorcycle-helmet

Additionally, the completion of a rider education and training course can ensure a safer riding experience. As May nears, let's commit to safe driving and riding, and to our role in ensuring a safe motorcycle-riding environment. For more information on motorcycle safety, visit www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/motorcycles. For additional statistics, please visit https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/ and search "motorcycle" under Crash Data Publications.

For more information on the Greene County Safe Communities Coalition, please call Loressa at 937-374-5655 or email her at lgonyer@gcph.info.

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