

## The Helmet Debate Burns Hot Again in 2012

The fight over motorcycle helmets has been an ongoing debate for decades. Now certain government agencies are using recent unfortunate accidents to turn up the heat again. While agencies such as the Center for Disease Control, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the state Department of Transportation with its Motorcycle Safety Program continue to quote motorcycle fatality statistics, how they arrive at those statistics should be under serious scrutiny.

According to Greg Patzer, manager of the Wisconsin Motorcycle Safety Program, part of the state DOT, 92% of those killed in motorcycle crashes last year in Wisconsin were not wearing helmets. But can Mr. Patzer tell us if any of those motorcyclists would have been saved if they had been wearing a helmet? "The number of fatal crashes sometimes climbs when there's a warm Spring and motorcycling gets off to an early start. Other years, it just seems like bad luck when a high number of riders are killed." It sounds like Mr. Patzer doesn't really know what causes motorcycle fatalities yet continues to arbitrarily name non-helmet usage as the culprit. 92% is a pretty impressive statistic but without knowing the circumstances of the accident, his information is useless.

Federal agencies such as the NHTSA have also joined the mandatory helmet ranks. The NHTSA cites that motorcycle fatalities have risen during the period of 1997 to 2010 from 2,116 fatalities to 4,502 fatalities. That's very true, on the surface. But what they fail to mention is how motorcycle registrations surged during the same time period and how the percentage of motorcycle fatalities basically stayed the same. There were 2,116 fatalities in 1997 for 3,826,000 motorcycles registered. In 2010, there were 4,502 fatalities for 8,368,000 motorcycles registered. That's a fatality rate of 0.05% in both cases. It's a fatality rate of much less than 1% which hasn't changed. Furthermore, motorcycle fatalities actually dropped in 2009 by 16% and have stayed relatively flat in 2010 and 2011.

But how can that be?! With more and more states dropping their mandatory helmet laws, the fatality rate should be going through the roof according to their assertions! In fact, they rely heavily on "estimates" which they sprinkle throughout their arguments of how helmets might have saved more lives. They fail to provide any hard evidence that helmets actually make a difference in lowering fatalities.

So if helmets aren't proven to lower motorcycle fatalities, what's the secret? We need to quit trying to make crashing safer and actually lower the number of crashes. Only through driver education and motorcycle awareness campaigns that are instituted by organizations such as ABATE of Wisconsin can we educate the general public to be safer on the road and be more aware of their surroundings. These programs have been effective in reaching new automobile drivers early before they start developing bad driving habits and bringing motorcycle awareness to the general public. New federal helmet mandates and road-side checkpoints do nothing but siphon already scarce dollars from the programs that actually make a difference.

So where do our government agencies sit on the matters of driver education and motorcycle awareness? The DOT refuses to spend money on motorcycle awareness, safety and education as well as refusing to use the digital signage that is already in place on the roadways to bring motorcycle awareness to the general driving public. Yet hundreds of thousands of dollars has been funneled to the state Motorcycle Safety Program to construct a trailer to haul to motorcycle events to encourage riders to take a riders education course. Is it any wonder if fatalities increase?! I believe that our State and Federal DOT's refusal to get involved and step up to run PSA's, billboards, awareness campaigns and related education funding has led to this problem we are seeing nationally. If our government agencies were serious about reducing motorcycle fatalities, they would stop trying to make crashes safer and attack the root causes for the accidents in the first place. As motorcyclists, our safety and motorcycle awareness is the priority. Shouldn't the government agencies in charge of our roadways make it their priority as well?

Dean "D-Day" Bartosh

ABATE of Wisconsin-Director of Public Relations

<p><b>It doesn't matter what you ride... what matters is that you have the right to ride.</b> Join and Support ABATE of Wisconsin: Protecting your Right to Ride since 1974.</p>	
<p>PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE YOUR INFORMATION                  _____ Annual Individual Membership \$25                  _____ Annual Couple Membership \$45 •                  (*Two people at same address—only one copy of our newsletter.)                  For Life Membership Rates or to join with a credit card visit our webpage at  <a href="http://www.abatewis.org">www.abatewis.org</a></p>	
<p>This is a _____ New Membership or a _____ Renewal Membership</p>	
<p>Name: _____</p>	
<p>Second Name if Couple: _____</p>	
<p>Postal Mailing Address: _____</p>	
<p>City: _____</p>	<p>State: _____</p>
<p>Zip: _____</p>	
<p>County Of Residence: _____</p>	<p>ABATE of Wisconsin, Inc. does not sell or share our membership information with anyone.</p>
<p>ABATE of Wisconsin, Inc. is a Non-Profit Membership Corporation dedicated to Protecting the Rights and Safety of all Motorcyclists. Paid members receive a sew on patch, membership card, our monthly newsletter and other rights of membership. For more information visit us on the web at <a href="http://www.abatewis.org">www.abatewis.org</a>.</p>	
<p>Mail with payment to: <b>ABATE of Wisconsin Membership</b>                  438 N Water St., Black River Falls, WI 54615                  715-284-7415 or 800-386-4442 <a href="mailto:abatewis@abatewis.org">abatewis@abatewis.org</a>                  Thank you to the Free Riders Press for this support &amp; promotion.</p>	

# SUMMER THUNDER ANNUAL POKER RUN AUGUST 25TH 2012

MUSIC  
BIKE SHOW

FOOD  
BEVERAGES



REGISTRATION:  
10:00 - 11:30 AM

SUBURBAN HD.  
THIENSVILLE, WI

1-800-371-9098

RIDE ENDS IN SAUKVILLE

MUSIC BY SOUTHERN IMPACT  
[WWW.PLEASANTVALLEYAUTO.COM](http://WWW.PLEASANTVALLEYAUTO.COM)

PLEASANT VALLEY AUTO BODY  
HOLESOT CUSTOMS

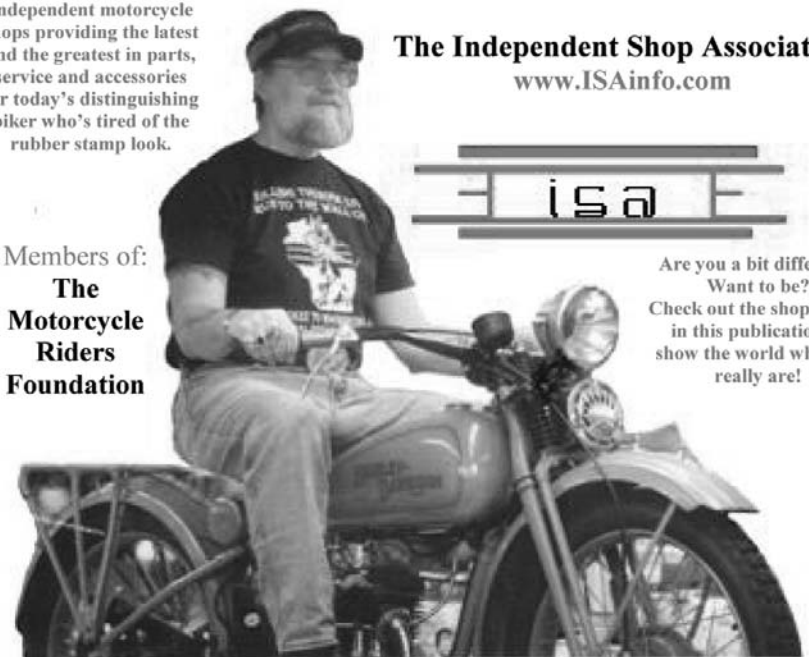
PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE SAUKVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Independent motorcycle shops providing the latest and the greatest in parts, service and accessories for today's distinguishing biker who's tired of the rubber stamp look.

The Independent Shop Association  
[www.ISAinfo.com](http://www.ISAinfo.com)

Members of:  
The  
Motorcycle  
Riders  
Foundation

Are you a bit different?  
Want to be?  
Check out the shops listed  
in this publication to  
show the world who you  
really are!



The Independent Shop Association is supported by the law office of:  
**Weigel, Carlson, Blau & Clemens, S.C.**  
3732 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53208

Providing a specialized Motorcycle Accident Team for your needs.  
Medical Doctor, Private Investigators, Engineer, Paralegals and Attorneys.

If you're in an accident, don't hesitate to call the law office that does so much to support your rights as a biker and works the hardest at getting you the compensation you deserve when you have been injured by the actions of others.

1-800-486-0106  
Member of ABATE of Wis.

Supporters of the "Run to the Wall"  
A Memorial weekend ride to the  
VNVM in Washington DC as part of  
"Rolling Thunder"

