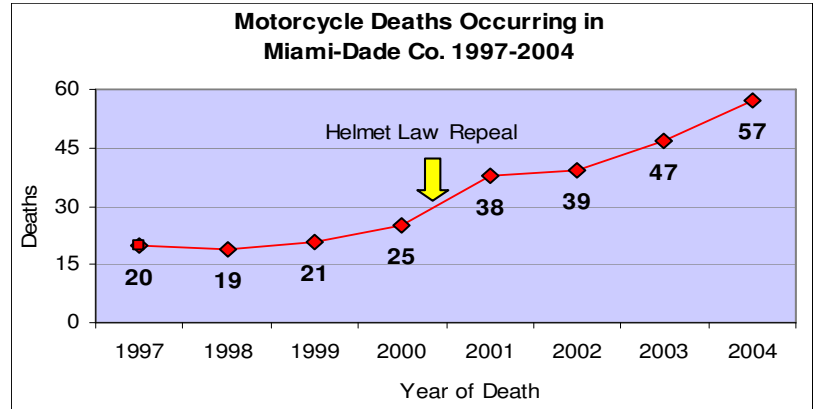


Fatal Motorcycle Crashes in Miami-Dade County, 1997-2004

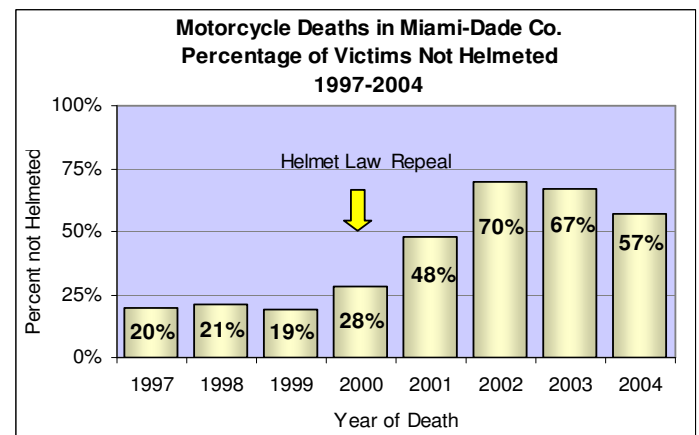
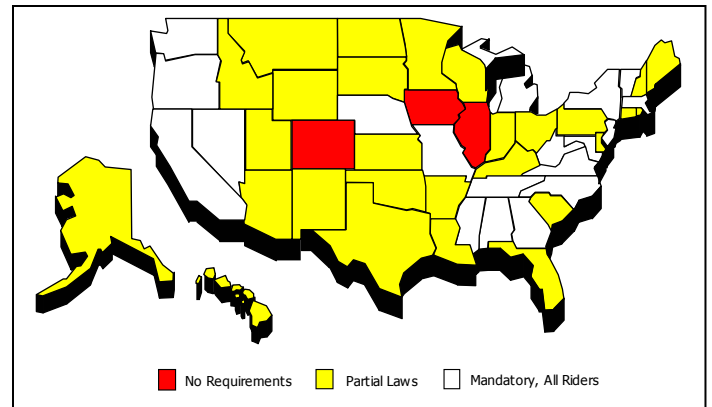


Since 1997, 265 people have died from motorcycle crashes on Miami-Dade Co. roads and highways. As shown in the figure below, the annual incidence has increased significantly since July 2000, when the Florida legislature passed a bill repealing the mandatory motorcycle helmet law. Motorcycle deaths in 2004 were more than twice the number seen in 2000 when the law changed.



Motorcycle Helmet Use

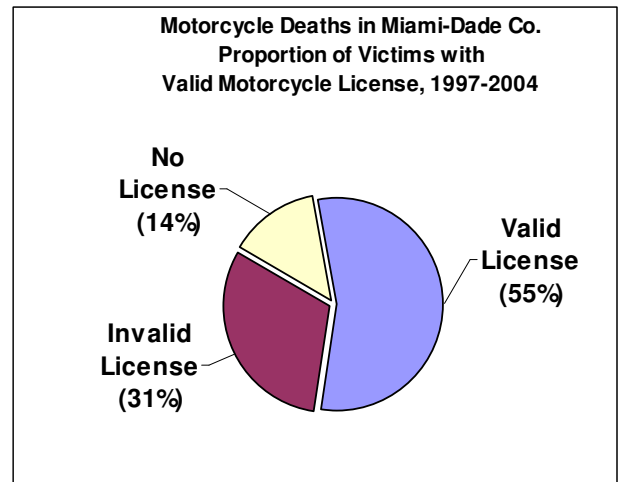
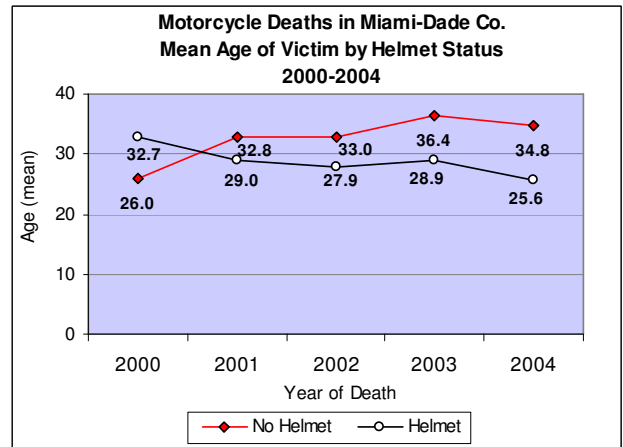
- Only 18 states enforce mandatory helmet laws for all motorcyclists. Florida is one of 29 states that have amended their motorcycle helmet laws to permit riding without a helmet for certain riders. Florida motorcyclists 21 years of age and older that show proof of a minimum of \$10,000 in medical insurance may ride without a helmet. Three states have no law regarding helmet use.
- Between 1997 and 2000, when helmet use was mandatory in Florida, the percentage of victims involved in fatal crashes that were not helmeted ranged between 20-28%.
- Over the next 3 years following the helmet law repeal, the percentage of victims not wearing a helmet increased substantially to a high of 70% in 2002. This rate has stabilized since 2003 to a rate of 57% in 2004.



Groups at Risk

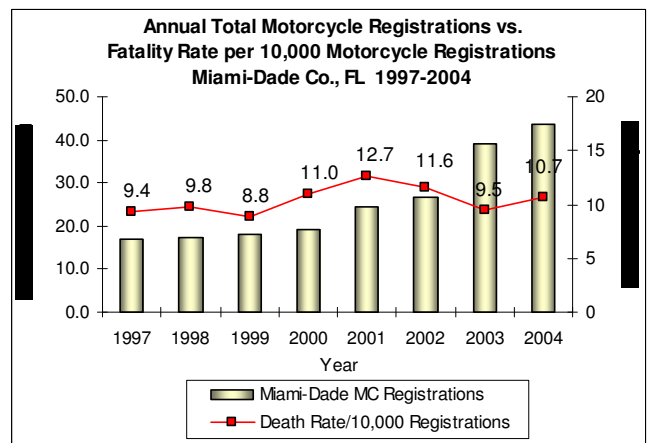
The characteristics of victims of motorcycle crashes included:

- 96% of victims were male and 97% were drivers. There were 13 passenger victims among the 265 deaths over the 8-year period.
- Age: The mean age of the victims differed by helmet status. Since the helmet law repeal, helmeted victims have tended to be younger than unhelmeted victims, with the gap in mean age widening each year since 2001.
- Non-residents comprised 17% of the victims.
- Education: More than 1/3 of the victims had higher than a high school education (37% of unhelmeted riders; 32% of helmeted riders)
- Substance Abuse: More than 1/3 of the victims were under the influence of drugs or alcohol (40% of unhelmeted riders; 31% of helmeted riders)
- Licensure: Nearly 1/2 of the victims did not possess a valid motorcycle license and 14% did not have any license at all.



Exposure

- Some proponents of a 'no helmet law' argue that one reason for the increase in deaths is that there are more motorcycles on the road. To examine this, we obtained an annual list of the number of registered motorcycles in the county and calculated the mortality rate based on the number of registered cycles.
- Between 1997 and 2000, motorcycle registrations and the concomitant mortality rate per 10,000 motorcycles remained unchanged. Since 2000, registrations have increased every year to where there were more the twice as many registered motorcycles in 2004 compared to 2000.
- The death rate in 2000 and 2001 increased despite this registration increase suggesting that other factors were responsible for the increased death rate. Since 2002, the mortality rates have stabilized per 10,000 registered motorcycles.



10 Ways to Be Safe on a Motorcycle

1. Take a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) class to learn the basic ways to control your motorcycle and to learn how to recognize traffic situations that you need to be ready to handle.
2. Always wear protective clothing and a helmet. A tiny beanie helmet held on by a thin strap and affixed with a fake DOT sticker is not enough.
3. Maintain your bike so it is safe. Check your tire pressure BEFORE every ride. Keep records of the intervals when you replace tires, chains, clutch cables, batteries, brakes, etc. You don't want an equipment malfunction to contribute to a motorcycle accident.
4. Beware of oncoming motorists turning left in front of you at intersections. This is the leading cause of death of motorcycle riders. Leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front and stay out of blind spots. Slow down before you enter an intersection. Have an escape route planned. Don't travel too close to cars in front of you. Position your bike so it can be seen by the 'left turner'.
5. Never start across an intersection from a stop light without looking at the oncoming cross traffic. Someone may be running a light and heading right for you.
6. Do you need to make an evasive maneuver? Remember the bike goes where you look. Don't fixate on any object unless you want to hit it.
7. Don't allow Tailgating: If someone is tailgating you, either speed up to open more space or pull over and let them pass. Remember that a bike can stop faster than a car so you don't want a truck on your tail when you find yourself trying to brake to avoid an accident. Also, don't tailgate the vehicle in front of you. Oncoming drivers can't see you.
8. Assume Drivers Can't See You: When stopping in traffic, position your bike either to the left or right hand side of the lane and stop at least 8-10 feet from the car in front. This gives you a clear way out if the guy coming up behind doesn't stop.
9. Avoid Riding at Night: Avoid riding especially late Saturday night and early Sunday when drunken drivers may be on the road. It goes without saying that you shouldn't drink and ride.
10. Ride Your Own Ride: Many people get into trouble trying to keep up with a group who may be more experienced. Know your personal limits.

Produced by the Miami-Dade County Injury Surveillance System

Data Sources: Death Certificates & Miami-Dade Medical Examiner Dept.

PHONE (IFCK): 305-804-7212 (MDCHD): 305-470-5649

E-MAIL: sdearwater@med.miami.edu

<http://dadehealth.org/injury/INJURYintro.asp>

