

## **Protective Gear Saved My Life**

My name is Caryn Dolores Myers, and wearing motorcycle safety gear saved my life last summer. It was June 15th, 2007, at 11:30 P.M., and I was riding my motorcycle to work. As I crested a hill, I saw a car stopped at the intersection. Little did I know that that moment in time would change my life for a while, possibly forever.

Although I had the right of way, just before I got to the bottom of the hill, the car began to pull out. I applied both brakes, but had little time. My bike impacted the driver's door, and I went flying through the air. I hit the pavement, bounced, and ended up lying on the left side of the centerline. I tried to roll onto my back, but when I tried, pain shot through my pelvis area.

It was late, the roads were deserted, and I had not seen the driver of the car. I keep my cellphone close to my heart when I ride, and it was still there. I opened my phone and hit speed dial 4 . . . Home. My mom answered, and I yelled, "911, U.S. 31 and Fountain!" I yelled it again and again until she understood. As my mom hung up, a lady stopped. She made the initial call to 911 and then stayed and talked to me. I was so close to home that my mom made it to the scene just before the ambulance arrived to take me to the hospital.

At the emergency room, my pelvis was stabilized (it was fractured in two places), and then I was taken by Aero Med to Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids. The next day I underwent surgery. A titanium plate and five titanium screws were inserted into my pelvis to stabilize the bones so they could grow back together. I was then sentenced to three months in a wheelchair while my torn tendons and broken bones grew back together.

I spent three months sitting in that wheelchair feeling bitter and wondering, Why? It wasn't until I started to walk again that I began to see the crash as a blessing instead of a curse. It had not been my fault. I had learned the art of relaxing, instead of running. I would get wage reimbursement for my lost work time. And it was a miracle that I was alive to be learning how to walk again at all.

I learned that the average recovery (rehabilitation) time for a victim of a motorcycle crash is one to three years (if they live). I met people along the way who had also suffered serious injuries, some of them in wheelchairs. Some of them would be in their wheelchairs for life. Brave, amazing people who helped me with my own attitude adjustment.

My riding gear did the job that it was intended to do. My pelvis was fractured in two places and there were torn tendons, but everything else was intact. Without all the proper gear, I would have lost a lot of skin and would have more than likely experienced a severe concussion (if not permanent brain injury or death). If I had survived without my gear, I could have spent years in the hospital recovering.

I've heard it said that there are two types of motorcyclists: those who have been in crashes, and those who will be in crashes. Consider every driver on the road as being unaware of your presence. Any driver could be the one who may suddenly, negligently, pull out in front of you. Please increase your chances of survival. Wear the appropriate riding gear every time you swing your leg over a motorcycle.