

Motorcycle helmet law repeal costs lives and millions of dollars

Editor's note: This is the first of three articles which focus on reports, data and research regarding the impact of the repeal of Michigan's all-rider motorcycle helmet law in April of 2012.

After years of lobbying by the Michigan ABATE, a motorcycle rider rights advocacy group, the long-standing requirement that all riders in Michigan must wear a helmet was modified in April of 2012 to allow riders 21 and over and who meet other requirements, to ride without a helmet if they choose.

A recent report titled *Estimate of Reduction in Deaths, Injuries, and Societal Costs in 2015 Michigan Motorcycle Crashes with Helmet Use* concludes "If helmets had been worn by all the crash-involved motorcyclists in 2015, monetary costs of motorcycle crashes would have been reduced by \$28 million - \$32 million, quality of life costs would have been reduced by \$157 million - \$169 million, and total societal costs would have been reduced by \$185 - \$201 million. Twenty-one deaths would have been prevented, and total societal costs of motorcycle crashes would have been lower by 10.5%-11.4%."

The report was completed by Lidia P. Kostyniuk, Ph.D, P.E., Research Scientist, Emerita with the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute at the request of the Skilled Motorcyclist Association - Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc., (SMARTER) a 501(c) 3 non-profit motorcyclist safety organization.

Dr. Dan Petterson, President and CEO of SMARTER explained the associations' request. "The University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI) recently released the report *Societal Costs of Traffic Crashes and Crime in Michigan: 2017 Update*. The Michigan Traffic Crash Reporting System also keeps records on Michigan motorcyclist crashes including fatalities, injuries and helmet use. We thought an expert would be able to use the data from these two sources to estimate how many lives are lost, injuries are suffered and dollars are wasted because Michigan repealed our all-rider helmet law in 2012, so we contacted Dr. Kostyniuk to ask if this was possible. She not only said yes it was possible, she said she would do it."

SMARTER Board of Directors, Vice-chairman, Dr. Don Smith, Professor Emeritus of Michigan State University points out "Dr. Kostyniuk's report is only for one year, 2015, because that is the year of the data used in the official UMTRI costs of crashes and crime report so that required the use of 2015 motorcyclists crash and helmet use data. However, one can easily see how many lives and dollars may have been saved in the more than six years since our law was changed. The law change was a devastating setback for traffic safety and it is time we end what every responsible elected official should now see was a tragic mistake."