

Improved Awareness Messages

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www.smarter-usa.org
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Introduction

There are several reasons SMARTER (www.smarter-usa.org) does not think traditional motorist awareness for motorcyclist safety campaigns are effective.

Tips for improved messages.

Traditional motorist awareness campaigns for motorcyclist safety have no evidence of effectiveness and likely do not work for their intended purpose: changing driver behavior and therefore reducing car/motorcyclist crashes. However, if States and organizations insist on spending their money for these campaigns we have some tips for improving the messages.

SMARTER's positions and recommendations are based on our best understanding and application of research (<https://smarter-usa.org/research/>).

1. Awareness messages should reference motorcycle riders or motorcyclists not motorcycles.

For example, the month should be motorcycle rider or motorcyclists awareness month not motorcycle awareness month. Our focus must be on people, not machines. http://smarter-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/1_2015_Making_the_case_for_.pdf

Here is a possible scenario where the driver did exactly as the traditional message suggests. While driving, a car driver looked for motorcycles and saw a group parked at a restaurant. The driver looked twice and determined there were five machines. No lives were saved.

2. The message must provide a behavior change that drivers can understand, implement and has some research evidence that supports the change in driver behavior might increase the chance driver will perceive an oncoming motorcycle rider.

The traditional May message provided to car drivers is “May is Motorcycle Awareness Month, Look Twice, Save a Life.” This is an easy to remember rhyming phrase which tells readers the end goal – save a life. *However*, general safety messages that tell people to “drive safely” or “be alert” or “look twice” are not specific enough to be meaningful to the audience

There is no evidence that looking twice fulfills this criterion. Failure to look or failure to look twice is not the problem. **Failure to look with specificity or focused intent is more likely a contributing factor for drivers not to see motorcyclist's.** For additional information see: <http://smarter-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Looking-Twice-is-not-Enough-May-2019.pdf>

3. The message must be factually correct.

A common message is “Look twice - Save a life. Motorcycles are Everywhere. The fact is motorcyclists are not everywhere. Motorcycles are approximately 3% of registered vehicles and approximately .06% of vehicle miles traveled. Telling drivers that motorcycles are everywhere is a bit like crying wolf. We tell drivers motorcycles are everywhere but when they rarely see a motorcyclist they learn not to expect them in the traffic mix.

Improved Awareness Message Examples

It is likely many states and motorcyclist safety advocacy organizations will continue to publish “May is Motorcycle Awareness” month messages, so use the above tips to improve your messages or use or modify the examples below. .

May is Motorcycle Rider Safety Awareness Month. Join us in helping to keep those who ride safe. Motorcyclists are Hard to See. Look with specific intent for those who ride.

Checking your phone even at red lights and stop signs can take your eyes off the road for seconds. These seconds with your eyes off the road may not seem like much, but they can be life threatening for someone riding a motorcycle. While stopped search for motorcycle riders near, intermediate, far and back to near you. .

As warmer weather arrives, more motorcycle riders will be enjoying the roads. Riders are a small part of the traffic mix but just because you don’t often see them, doesn’t mean they will not be approaching. Ask yourself, “is there a motorcyclist approaching?” Increasing your focus on motorcyclists can make the road safer.

May is Motorcyclist Safety Awareness month and (your state’s name) motorists are urged to remain aware of motorcyclists at all times to keep everyone safe. Look with specific intent to determine if a rider is approaching.

A common misconception is that most crashes involving motorcyclists and vehicles occur on highways. Data shows that a large majority take place on city streets, where a lot of vehicles are in motion. Be sure to look around objects that might your block your view of a motorcyclist such as your car’s window pillar, mirrors, signs, trees or light poles.

When you search for motorcyclists, see more than the motorcycle, see the person under the helmet. They may be your friend, neighbor or relative.