

Let Them Die: The Consequences of Repealing All-rider Helmet Requirements

August 20, 2026 - www.smarter-usa.org

Fact one: Hundreds of researchers representing distinguished organizations have studied the topic of motorcycle helmet effectiveness. Meticulous reviews of the published literature have concluded the helmet effectiveness research demonstrates clear lifesaving and injury reducing benefits of wearing a helmet.

Fact two: All-rider motorcycle helmet use requirements (universal helmet laws) significantly increase the percent of riders who wear a helmet. When an all-rider helmet use requirement is in effect, nearly every rider wears a helmet. Without such a requirement the helmet use rate drops to 50 % or lower.

These two facts are clear and undeniable. The research support is overwhelming.

Motorcyclist safety advocacy organizations have made the helmet effectiveness and helmet use requirement effectiveness research readily available (1). The sponsors of the so called "Ride in Freedom Act" (H.R. 10067 and S. 5274), which aims to repeal Washington, DC's universal helmet mandate, and the Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) which strongly supports these bills, cannot be ignorant of the research.

Unless this research evidence is simply denied, advocates for "adult choice" helmet use must believe that the freedom not to wear a helmet is worth the cost in human lives, disability and money. No matter how a person might try to spin the issue, universal helmet law repeal represents, at best, a blatant disregard for common sense, and at worst, reckless endangerment of the lives of citizens who ride motorcycles. Choosing to just let them die goes well beyond simply a bad choice - it heads toward the realm of depraved indifference.

All-rider helmet use requirements are proven effective, while other traditional countermeasures such as rider training and communication campaigns have little or no evidence of positive impact. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) gives universal motorcycle helmet use laws the highest rating of five stars, its highest rating of motorcyclist safety countermeasure effectiveness. Motorcycle rider training is rated two stars, signifying having limited evaluation evidence, although it may be effective if implemented well. Awareness communication campaigns are categorized as unproven or needing research (2)

"A crash that never happens is better than a safer crash" makes a righteous line for a quote in a newspaper arguing for rider training and against a helmet use requirement. This misalignment of priorities only works by ignoring the overwhelming evidence of a helmet use requirement, compared with the weaker evidence for rider training, which might work but only if implemented well. As an effective strategy to save motorcyclist lives, the all-rider helmet requirement is a proven countermeasure that works.

1. [Helmets & Laws | Skilled Motorcyclist Association](#)
2. [Countermeasures That Work: A Highway Safety Countermeasure Guide for State Highway Safety Offices, 11th Edition, 2023](#)