

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 31, 2014

CONTACT:
Paris Ervin 217.782.5025
Jae Miller 312.814.4693

IDOT Joins Other Motorcycle Safety Advocates to Encourage Riders to “Gear Up - Ride Smart”

Riders Advised to Use Proper Safety Gear, Get Bikes Checked and Not Ride After Drinking

SPRINGFIELD - In an effort to reduce motorcycle fatalities and injuries, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Illinois Motorcycle Dealers Association (IMDA) joined forces to kick off the 2014 riding season's "Gear Up-Ride Smart" motorcycle safety campaign. As the riding season gets under way, IDOT and IMDA are urging cyclists to have their bikes safety-checked to make sure they are in proper running condition, check their high-visibility (Hi Viz) clothing and take advantage of the free motorcycle training classes throughout the state.

Motorcycles represent 3 percent of total vehicle registrations, yet motorcycle fatalities account for more than 15 percent of all vehicle fatalities. Statistics show that about half of motorcycle rider deaths occur in crashes involving only the motorcycle, and approximately 40 percent of those fatalities involve motorcycle operators who rode after drinking.

"We want to eliminate fatalities on Illinois roadways, and motorcyclists can help by ensuring they are wearing the proper gear, taking a training or refresher course as needed, and not drinking and driving," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann L. Schneider. "Motorcyclists are at an increased risk of injury or death when involved in a crash, so it is imperative that all riders "Gear Up-Ride Smart" this riding season.

Jay Hall, president of the IMDA, stressed the importance of having motorcycles checked thoroughly so riders are ready for long summer rides. As with automobiles, a well maintained bike makes for a safer ride. Also important is the need to wear the proper protective gear. By taking the necessary precautions: bike in proper running condition - tires checked, fluids and brakes checked, and ensuring your gear is Hi Viz, riders can keep themselves and others safe on the roadway.

Terry Redman, IDOT Cycle Rider Safety Training Program Manager, reminds riders that warmer weather brings out more bikes and that the motoring public is not always used to sharing the road. Motorcycle fatalities increased from 148 in 2012 to 155 in 2013, according to provisional data. IDOT encourages all riders to make the right choices to include checking your bike before each ride, hydrating with water, evaluating your medical condition before and during the ride, never assuming you are seen by other motorists, using proper braking techniques, staying alert during the entire ride and using all appropriate and Hi Viz riding gear.

Motorcyclists need to be properly licensed. Also critical to safe riding is continuing training, especially after acquiring a new bike. Illinois is one of two states in the nation offering free motorcycle training classes to Illinois licensed residents. Sign up for a class - beginners, intermediate or advanced. Riders have a responsibility to help ensure safety on the roadways.

IMDA President Jay Hall reminds riders to make that appointment to have your bike checked out before your first ride. Don't be left on the side of the road!

"Gear Up - Ride Smart" also warns against riding after drinking or taking medications. A rider has difficulty staying alert when under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Remember-- when properly trained and equipped, motorcyclists greatly improve prospects for a safe ride. Riding offers freedom and enjoyment but it is your responsibility -- for your safety as well as others -- to Gear Up-Ride Smart.

IDOT encourages all Illinois motorcycle riders to help create a safer motorcycling environment for all. To learn more about IDOT's motorcycle safety program and courses, laws and regulations, statistics, and additional educational materials, please visit <http://www.startseeingmotorcycles.org/>.