

Next week will mark the beginning of National Motorcycle Safety and Awareness Month, and Pennsylvania needs this heightened awareness more than most states. Nationally, motorcycle accident deaths have been declining. But in Pennsylvania, they rose by six percent in the first nine months of 2010.

The fatality figures were released by a widely respected safety group, the Governor's Highway Traffic Safety Association. According to the association, motorcycle fatalities decreased by two percent nationally last year. This was the second straight year where the national figure declined.

In Pennsylvania, however, motorcycle fatalities were up. There were 197 motorcycle accident deaths in the first nine months of last year, compared to 186 during the same period the year before.

Reducing these disturbing numbers in Pennsylvania will require the efforts of not only motorcyclists themselves. It will require a concerted effort from all who share the road. Passenger car drivers, truckers, and others must all do their part to drive safely.

Citizens and legislators also bear responsibility. Pennsylvania's response to the problem of distracted driving, for example, has not been sufficient. Thirty other states have enacted bans on texting while driving, while Pennsylvania's efforts to do so have meet with resistance.

As the weather warms, more bikers will be out on the roads. As gasoline becomes more and more expensive, the number of motorcycle riders may grow even more. Now is the time for everyone - cars, trucks, motorcycles, and other types of vehicles - to do their part to promote safety.

Source: "Increase in Pa. motorcycle fatalities bucks national trend," Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 4-19-11