



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Watching Out for Those on Two Wheels

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Following a long winter, motorcyclists across the Central and Northern New York region are eager to hit the road. As summer approaches, it's extra important for those on both two wheels and four to safely share the road.

As the calendar page turns from May—which is also Motorcycle Safety Month—to June, I'm happy to report that a bill I sponsored to help make our roads safer has passed the State Senate. The proposal would require increased motorcycle safety awareness as a component of every new driver's training. This legislation would teach drivers how safely share the road with those on two wheels and help to decrease the amount of motorcycle-vehicle crashes.

This measure—which still needs to pass the Assembly—is just part of the equation when it comes to making our roadways safer. According to the most recent statistics available from the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, in 2012 there were 5,916 motorcycle accidents statewide. Of those accidents, 164 were fatal. As we work to reduce the number of crashes, I encourage you to keep the following tips in mind while you're out on the road in the coming months:

Keep an eye out: It goes without saying that motorcycles are a lot smaller than other vehicles. Because of this, they can be easily hidden in the blind spots of those behind the wheel. As you change lanes or travel through an intersection, be sure to take an extra moment to look for motorcycles.

It's just a light: On many motorcycles, turn signals are not self-canceling. As a result, many motorcyclists forget to turn their signal light off. This is especially true of beginners. Don't take a signal light for granted and be sure it's real before you react.

They don't always dodge: Many of us assume motorcycles can maneuver quickly, but that's not always the case. Don't always assume that a motorcycle will be able to dodge out of the way when encountered with rough road conditions, bad weather or other factors.

Give them space: It's important to treat a motorcycle as a full-sized vehicle. Give them a full lane and if you're behind them, remember to give them room—even the smallest amount of contact can have severe consequences for those traveling by motorcycle.

Whether you're behind the wheel of a car or riding on a motorcycle, it's so critical to remain aware of others on the road. As we transition into warmer months, I encourage all drivers to be cognizant of others and to travel with caution.