

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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The changing face of motorcycling **Popularity among women, families gives riders new look but Secretary Land still cites need for training**

Greater interest among women and families is changing the face of motorcycling but the need for training and caution remains constant, Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land reminded all riders today as she kicked off Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month.

“The traditional look of motorcycling is evolving but some things never change,” said Land, flanked by other safety advocates at a Capitol news conference. “That means completing the required training, earning the motorcycle endorsement for your driver’s license, observing the rules of the road and wearing appropriate safety gear. Whether you ride as a hobby or for daily transportation, remember that you share the road with others.”

Men still make up the overwhelming majority of Michigan’s 506,000 licensed riders. More women, though, are taking to the road on motorcycles. Michigan has more than 51,000 female licensed riders, up from 37,000 just seven years ago.

Detroit television personality Lila Lazarus represents that growing number. An avid rider, she emphasized the importance of proper training before taking to the road.

“Taking a motorcycle safety course can mean the difference between life and death,” Lazarus said. “You learn the techniques needed to deal with the dangers of the road. The reality is there are elements you cannot control when riding a motorcycle, but the course teaches you the elements you can control. It’s about riding safe and living for the next ride.”

Land recognized Lazarus as Michigan’s unofficial traffic safety “ambassador” for promoting the need for motorcycle training and safety.

Motorcycling is a family pastime as well, according to Phil Mowers, a West Michigan rider coach. Mowers, his wife Susan, and their daughters enjoy riding together.

Office of Highway Safety Planning Director Michael L. Prince said that as the number of motorcycle riders grows both nationally and in the state, OHSP has increased its support for

training and education efforts in 2007. Motorcycle fatalities in the state fell from 122 in 2005 to 114 last year, a 7 percent decline. But, he cautioned that the job is far from over.

“Michigan cannot let its guard down,” Prince said. “We will continue partnering with other safety advocates to remind riders – and all motorists – of their responsibilities. The best way to enjoy riding is to follow the rules and make safety a priority.”

Almost half of the more than 3,200 motorcycle crashes in 2006 involved no other vehicles except the motorcycle, which suggests that greater caution or training could have helped to prevent some of the incidents.

Land is taking steps to reinforce the need for training and safe riding, including:

- Working with the Michigan Department of Transportation to post motorcycle safety reminders on more than 70 highway message boards in Detroit and Grand Rapids beginning next week.
- Engaging stakeholders in the safety effort. Through a partnership with the Office of Highway Safety Planning, informational literature will be distributed by more than 200 motorcycle dealerships, 13 public training providers, 15 private training providers and the Honda Gold Wing Touring Association. It also will be available in Secretary of State offices.
- Sending the Department of State’s Mobile Branch Office to various areas, giving riders a convenient way to get their motorcycle endorsements.
- Proposing that the number of training facilities be expanded to accommodate more riders. Land also advocates a law change that would require people to have a motorcycle endorsement on their driver’s license before being allowed to register a motorcycle.

The Department of State administers Michigan’s Motorcycle Safety Program. It oversees the network of public and private training schools. Land worked with lawmakers last year to secure additional funding for more training opportunities and the purchase of additional motorcycles for public training sites. More than 20,000 residents are expected to attend motorcycle training or go through a third-party skills test this year.

All riders must take a knowledge test and successfully complete a safety class or a skills test with a third-party examiner before a motorcycle endorsement is issued. The endorsement is designated as “CY” on a driver’s license. A safety course is required for 16- and 17-year-olds as well as for adults who fail the rider skills test twice.

Land cited the critical role that instructors play in preparing riders. She recognized the achievements of the Mowers family as well as those of Jana Barry and Jessica Slusser, a mother-daughter team that coaches riders enrolled in Mott Community College’s Motorcycle Safety Program.

Visit www.Michigan.gov/sos for more information about motorcycle safety.