

Motorcycles and Motorcycle Law in the United States:

The HISTORY

- 1880-1900** Bicycle manufacturers began adding internal combustion engines to their designs in order to manufacture the first motorcycles.¹
- 1901** Indian Motorcycle Manufacturing Company designed the Indian Single.
- 1903** Harley-Davidson began producing motorcycles.
- 1914-1919** Fifty percent of Harley-Davidson's output was dedicated to military contracts during the First World War. Motorcycles became vital as a tool to quickly hand-deliver communications. Triumph Motorcycles developed the Model H, considered by many to be the first modern motorcycle.²
- 1937** Hundreds of thousands of motorcycles are being produced during the supply ramp up to World War II.
- Post-WWII
1940s** Returning veterans who had fallen in love with riding during the war sought out cruisers for use back in the United States, leading to the first real mass popularization of motorcycles.
- 1952** Suzuki becomes the first Japanese company to enter the motorcycle market.³
- 1955** Both Honda and Yamaha enter the motorcycle race.
- 1960** Kawasaki releases their first bike.
- 1966** The National Highway Safety Act (NHSA) represented some of the first federal legislation regulating motorcycle riders by requiring states to adopt helmet laws. The NHSA didn't specifically mandate helmets be worn but states could only receive NHSA funds if they passed laws that enforced the regulatory rules spelled out in NHSA.⁴
- 1975** The U.S. Senate, after years of lobbying from the American Motorcycle Association, repealed the provision in the NHSA that denied funds to states that didn't pass helmet laws. By this time, all but three states had passed motorcycle helmet laws.
- 1992** California passed helmet laws for motorcyclists and rider fatalities dropped 37 percent in the state that year.⁵
- 1998** Kentucky repealed their universal helmet laws, followed by a 50 percent increase in rider fatalities.⁶
- 1999** Louisiana repealed their universal helmet laws, resulting in a 100 percent increase in rider fatalities. In 1997, the state had 741 motorcycle injuries. By 2000, there were 1,011 motorcycle accident injuries.⁷
- 1999-2000** Motorcycle sales start picking up drastically, driven in large part by baby boomers. Sales were just over 500,000 in 1990 and were just under 750,000 in 2000.
- 2006** Motorcycle sales in the United States peaked at more than 1.1 million bike sales.
- 2016** 5,337 motorcyclists died on American roadways, which accounted for 14 percent of highway crash fatalities.⁸
- 2018** The median age of motorcycle riders was 50, compared to a median age of 27 in 1980. Approximately 19 percent of riders are female, compared with just 6 percent of female owners in 1990. Only 3 percent of motorcycle driver deaths were attributed to women, though 93 percent of motorcycle passengers killed in accidents were female.

Have You Been Injured or Lost a Loved One in a Motorcycle Accident?
Schedule a FREE Consultation with the Motorcycle Law Group
1-800-321-8968

¹http://www.moh.org/motorcycles/#KeepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=400&width=850

²<https://www.thefirst.com/cars/history-of-u-s-military-motorcycles>

³<https://www.gi-rider.com/se-asia-motorcycling/the-early-japanese-motorcycles.10744/>

⁴<https://www.ncbtm.nh.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4784405/>

⁵<https://www.ihm.org/topics/motorcycles>

⁶<https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbmat/motorcycle/kenituly-ks03/LawChgKy.html#Anchor-Tab4-22864>

⁷<https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbmat/motorcycle/kenituly-ks03/LawChgLa.html>

