

TZD Tuesday | Sept. 27, 2022 – Deer vs. Motorcycle

Minnesota's large deer population makes them a safety hazard on the road all year long, but deer-vehicle crashes peak in the autumn months. Although all motorists need to be extra cautious as the weather cools down, deer crashes can be especially dangerous for motorcyclists — a group which accounted for 15 of the 18 vehicle-deer related deaths in the last five years (2016-2020).

Deer are unpredictable – they stop in the middle of the road, they cross and quickly re-cross back, and sometimes even move toward an approaching vehicle. While it is important to plan ahead for unexpected situations, strategy isn't enough if you don't have the skills to execute it. [Rider training](#) helps new riders develop skills and earn a license, while returning and experienced riders can sharpen their skills. The skills learned in the training can save your life.

Sadly, motorcyclist traffic fatalities overall are the highest they've been in several years. Through Sept. 26, preliminary figures show 76 motorcyclists have died on Minnesota roads so far this season. At this time in previous years, that compares with 59 deaths last year, 56 in 2020 and 40 in 2019. All the more reason to take rider training, learn the skills to avoid deer crashes and other hazards on the road, and for riders and drivers to work together to make safety a priority for the remainder of the motorcycle season.

Motorcyclists Safety Tips to Avoid Deer Crashes:

- Avoid night and low-light riding periods. Be especially cautious from 6 - 9 p.m., when deer are most active.
- A rider's best response when encountering a deer is to use both brakes for maximum braking and to keep your eyes and head up to improve your chances of keeping the bike up.
- Use high beams as much as possible at night, especially in deer-active areas.
- Watch for the reflection of deer eyes and for deer silhouettes on the shoulder of the road. If anything looks slightly suspicious, slow down.
- Slow down in areas known to have a large deer population – such as areas where roads divide agricultural fields from forest land.
- High visibility gear can assist other driver's in seeing you better; whether it's while making an evasive maneuver to avoid a deer or laying on the roadway after impacting a deer.

When deer cross the road, they don't look twice for motorcycles. Stay alert and always wear full protective gear to protect yourself in case of a crash.