

About the OSU Crash Study
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The next major motorcycle crash study in the US will be conducted by Oklahoma State University. The last major crash study in the US, was the Hurt Study, in 1981, which studied 900 crashes, the lowest number to be considered adequate from a statistical point of view. The most recent crash study was from 1999-2000 in Europe. Motorcycle Accident In-Depth Study (MAIDS) Report in which 921 crashes were studied.

The OSU study, is assigned to Samir Ahmed, a civil engineering professor with no prior experience in motorcycle crash causation studies. Actual investigative work will be contracted. The study area will again be Los Angeles, same as in the Hurt Study, and perhaps one other area. The OSU selection was political. The primary sponsor of the legislation funding the study was Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), who at the time was chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. On the short list of potential subcontractors is Hurt, who at age 79 is president of the Head Protection Research Laboratory in Paramount, California.

Reports from the OSU study will not be available until 2013 due to layers of bureaucracy. NHTSA has to submit an application to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Once that application is submitted, approval is expected to take six months. Expect the NHTSA pilot study to begin in 2008, and 18 months to release pilot study info. In fall 2009, the OSU research study may start and may take 4 years to complete.

History of Funding for the New Crash Study:

In 2000, National Agenda for Motorcycle Safety proposed a new crash study.

In 2005, a federal transportation reauthorization bill, SAFETEA-LU, authorized \$2.1 million for a motorcycle crash study, with the condition that federal funds are matched from a non-governmental source. The motorcycle industry was willing to match, but there was a cost estimate of \$8M rather than \$4.2M as authorized by SAFETEA-LU. On 6/29/07, the MSF reevaluated and committed \$2.8M for the new study. When MSF factored in an NHTSA payment for a pilot study, they concluded the funds would suffice.

The OSU study will use the same OECD methodology which was used in the Hurt Study and the MAIDS report. Independent investigators are dispatched to motorcycle accidents, and collect data. About 2,000 variables are coded for each crash, including accident reconstruction, vehicle inspection, witness interviews, and medical records for the injured riders and passengers. Information is then analyzed to identify human, environmental and vehicle factors that contributed to the accident, and compared with two riders of similar age, experience and motorcycle type who were not involved in an accident but who traveled the same stretch of road at the same time of day.

Although 900 is a smaller sample size, the number of analytical variables is 20 times greater with OECD than with analysis of FARS data. The NHTSA 2001 analysis of FARS data report on Fatal Single Vehicle Motorcycle Crashes identified some major areas of interest that hadn't been identified in the 1981 Hurt Study. More riders over age 40 are getting killed. More than half the fatalities were related to negotiating a curve prior to a crash, and more deaths were occurring on rural, rather than urban, roadways.

Supposed facts found while researching this article:

From 1981 until 2007 almost 11 million street bikes were sold in the U.S.

Current rider population in 2007 is about 6.6 million.

From 1990 to 2007, motorcycles larger than 749 cc has increased from 40% to over 80%.

From 1985 to 2007, average rider age increased from 27 to 41.

Estimates of vehicle miles traveled remain about 0.5%.

Motorcycle fatalities in 2006 were about 11.3% of all MV fatalities.

Since 2001, cell phone use, which increases motorist inattention, has increased substantially.