

# Mandatory Education

AS OF NOW, THERE ARE TWO STATES THAT REQUIRE new riders to take a rider education course to receive their motorcycle endorsement or license. Many other states are keeping a close eye on this new process to see how things develop over time.

As a Motorcycle Safety Foundation RiderCoach, I feel that you cannot go wrong with education, but I can also understand the downside of this requirement.

Many folks have said that making education mandatory for a license may just become another reason for people to ride unlicensed. This would increase an already big problem that many states have to deal with: unlicensed motorcycle operators. I've seen some studies that indicate certain states have as many as 50 percent of motorcycle riders riding without a proper license, so why would they want to take a chance and increase a number that they have been trying to decrease for years? Plus, to top things off, can anyone actually prove that education decreases the amount of accidents and/or fatalities? While there are certainly studies that will show percentages of untrained riders involved in accidents, what about riders that have gone through a rider education course and their involvement with accidents?

That's a study that's hard to find — if one was ever done at all. Statistics, percentages, and surveys can always be skewed to represent the point of view you want to make.

While most rider education courses concentrate on a combination of skills and street strategies, I truly believe that if you do not apply what you have learned and practice it, education will more than likely do nothing for you. Another thing to consider is that there are thousands of riders that never had an education course of any kind, yet have a riding career that never includes the word *accident*. What are these people doing that leads them to an un-

scarred record? I'm guessing that a small percentage has to do with luck or being a natural-born rider; perhaps it's their pattern of thinking that helps develop the skills they need for survival.

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when education becomes regulation. We have not had a major study of motorcycle crashes, the reasons for them, or how to avoid them in over 30 years. With the most recent study not having the appropriate funding, it may be some time before we actually get one.

Educating riders on skills and promoting the practice of them is a key element for the motorcycling community. Maybe we should also be studying the behavior that makes a safe, skilled rider. Getting funding for research like that would be costly and difficult. But as much as it would be good to know what causes accidents, I think it would be good to know why others never have an accident. We could learn a lot from those people that studies keep labeling as untrained.

So what's best for us: mandatory education or government regulation of safety equipment? Educating riders is definitely a better step forward. Should behavior aspects be reviewed more than the skills approach? I'm not sure. A review as to why a rider develops the drive to ride safer could be a key

point in reducing motorcycle accidents.

One thing is for sure: until such studies are put into place, we can only do what we know to keep ourselves out of the bad statistics column. If education is still our best defense right now, I don't see anything wrong with making it mandatory — especially for those that are new to the sport. For a lot of folks thinking about what keeps us safe isn't the top thing when it comes to riding discussions, but what do you think is best? Let your government official know; it just may help to push funding for that research we need. **AIM**



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