

MOTORCYCLE RIDER AND HELMET LAWS

Sarah Garner
TSRP

North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys
Sarah.Z.Garner@nccourts.org
919-500-9134

North Carolina Helmet Law: Is It Saving Lives?



Topics of Discussion

- Helmet Law
- Criteria
- Helmet identification



Helmet Law

- 20-140.4(a)(2)
- Became effective January 1, 2008
- Operator and passenger
- Wear on their heads
- Strap properly secured
- Must comply with: Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218

Would this apply?



Helmet Law Criteria

- North Carolina adopted FMVSS 218
- Firm outer shell
- 1 in. thick polystyrene inner liner
- Strong retention strap
- DOT sticker installed by the manufacturer
- Manufacturer's label sewn or glued to interior of helmet

Helmet Identification

■ Full face -



■ Flip full face-



Helmet Identification continued

■ $\frac{3}{4}$



■ $\frac{1}{2}$ Shell



Helmet Identification continued

■ Extravagant & Legal



Helmet Identification continued

- Illegal and/or Novelty



Helmet Identification continued

- Look inside the helmet
- Happened in NC
- Fatality
- Due to head injury



If we don't do our job?



Helmet Laws in NC pre-2008

- Before 1989: no law
- October 1, 1989: operator and passenger shall wear safety helmet of a type approved by the Commissioner of DMV: violation was an infraction with no specific penalty.
- List of approved helmets never promulgated by DMV

MC FATALITIES/100,000 REGISTERED: NORTH CAROLINA

YEAR	MC FATALITIES	TOTAL REGISTERED	FATALS PER 100,000 REGISTERED
2005	152	105,376	144.2
2006	150	110,637	135.6
2007	201	116,159	173.0
2008	169	121,959	138.6
2009	153	000	000
2010	166	182,836	90.7

ESTIMATED LIVES SAVED

- NHTSA estimates helmet use saved 92 lives in NC in 2008
- Estimate for 2009: 83 people
- 5 to 6 additional lives could have been saved with 100% compliance with helmet laws for both 2008 and 2009.

-Nearly 35% reduction in deaths per 100,000 motorcycles registered since law came into effect

-GHSP has sponsored two regional MC Safety Summits where officers receive specialized training on helmets, checkpoints, and license requirements

-Anecdotally, officers say compliance is on the rise and the serious injuries are dropping.

MOTORCYCLE HELMET POCKET CARDS

- North Carolina's Motorcycle Helmet Law
- No person shall operate a motorcycle or motorcycle on a highway or public vehicular area unless the operator and all passengers thereon wear on their heads, with a retention strap properly secured, safety helmets of a type that complies with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 218, 48 C.F.R. 163.401(c).
- What to look for in a legal helmet:
- Thick inner liner
- FMVSS 218 compliant motorcycle safety helmets will have a firm inner liner of polystyrene foam that is about one inch thick. Non-compliant helmets normally contain no liner or a thin soft foam padding.
- DOT Sticker
- Compliant motorcycle safety helmets will have the symbol "DOT" permanently stamped in the manufacturing on the back of the helmet. Some "novelty type" helmets are supplied with a separate "DOT" sticker or one can be purchased separately and placed on the helmet by the motorcyclist. This does not make this a compliant helmet.
- Manufacturer's Label
- Each compliant motorcycle safety helmet will have a permanently attached label either sewn or glued in the interior of the helmet. The label information has the manufacturer's name or identification, plastic model, inch, month and year of manufacture, type of shell and the operation maintain and an instruction label for cleaning and care of the helmet.
- Things to remember during a traffic stop for helmet violation: Look for proper manufacturer installed labeling inside and outside of helmet.
- Look for approximately one inch polystyrene liner (will be firm, not spongy).
- Take a photo of helmet outside and inside to identify in court or seize the helmet as evidence.
- Remind rider that they may not ride away until they have a compliant helmet or means of transporting motorcycle.
- ALWAYS refer to as **COMPLIANT** or **COMPLIES** with FMVSS 218.
- NEVER use the term **ACCIDENT**.
- Novelty Type Helmets: 218.112 Compliant with FMVSS 218.

Slide One

Slide Two

BikeSafe North Carolina

- Program began in London, England: MC fatalities dropped by 25%
- Pilot program in US: Wake County NC 2007-2008
- Expanded statewide in 2009
- Increases biker awareness of safety and laws

BikeSafe Rider Skills Day

- Riders are paired with instructors
- All motorcycles and equipment are inspected for safety and compliance; classroom instruction held
- Riders and instructors drive a specified road course
- Lunch
- Classroom: feedback from instructors
- Second specified road course with instructor
- Classroom: feedback from instructors

Benefits of BikeSafe

- Increase in operator's awareness of safety rules and laws
- Specialized training in proper equipment
- Expert training in operation
- Reduction in fatalities/ serious injury for riders
