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Topic: Motorcycles What's Hot and What's Not

Hollywood Helps Governor Promote Motorcycle Safety Awareness In Georgia

On behalf of the citizens of Georgia, Governor Sonny Perdue proclaimed February 6, 2007 as "Wild Hogs Motorcycle Safety Awareness Day" in Georgia to coincide with the release of a new motorcycling road-trip comedy film starring Tim Allen, John Travolta, Martin Lawrence and William H Macy. The Governor welcomed the cast of the movie to a motorcycle safety news conference on the steps of the State Capitol Tuesday, February 6th.

This event was designed to remind motorists of the seasonal return of many motorcycle enthusiasts to Georgia's highways. "Thousands of Georgia citizens enjoy riding motorcycles," said Governor Sonny Perdue. "I encourage all Georgia drivers to be cautious and observe these smaller vehicles as they return to Georgia's highways this spring."

Although the "Wild Hogs" movie is all in fun, the reason behind Georgia's motorcycle awareness campaign is a very serious one. "During recent years, Georgia has experienced a steady increase in fatal motorcycle crashes," says Director Bob Dallas of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. In 2005 alone, 144 motorcyclists died on Georgia roads. The number of motorcycle fatalities has tripled here in the last ten years.

Visibility is a key issue. Most motorcycle crashes occur during daylight hours. That's why motorists are encouraged to always be aware of motorcycles whether making lane changes or passing other vehicles.. and especially at intersections. "Due to their smaller size, motorcycles may be easily overlooked in the traffic flow, particularly if traffic is heavy or the driver is in a hurry," says GOHS Director Dallas, who is himself a motorcycle rider. "Motorists need to be continually alert when making left turns to insure that a motorcycle is not coming straight through the intersection."

Motorists also need to share the road and remember that a motorcycle is entitled to a full lane. Keeping a safe distance from motorcycles allows the operators opportunity to quickly maneuver to avoid road hazards or other traffic conditions.

Highway safety officials and Georgia motorcyclists ask that all highway users get in the habit of looking for motorcycles as they drive, not just during the safety awareness month but throughout the entire year. Sharing the road safely is an important responsibility for all motorists.

But motorcyclists must remember they have an equal share of safety responsibility on the road. Over two-thirds of car-motorcycle crashes are caused by drivers of other motor vehicles, not by motorcyclists. The other

driver either does not see the oncoming motorcyclist at all, or does not see the motorcyclist in time to avoid a crash. "So, riders should always operate their motorcycles in a defensive manner, within the rules of the road," says GOHS Deputy Director Rob Mikell, "and be constantly prepared to take evasive action if necessary." Deputy Director Mikell is also a Georgia motorcycle rider. "Motorcyclists should be attired with proper protective riding apparel, including a DOT-rated motorcycle safety helmet," says Mikell.

Operators are encouraged to enroll in the Motorcycle Safety Foundation training offered through the Georgia Department of Driver Services. It's important both legally and for safety purposes that every rider has a motorcycle endorsement on their driver's license and that motorcycles are properly licensed.

Motorcyclists must keep in mind that weather conditions, road surfaces and fatigue pose greater problems to them than to other motorists. Motorcycles should be kept in good operating condition using safety and maintenance checks found in the owner's manual. "And it just makes sense that motorcycle operators should keep themselves alert and in optimum highway condition as well," says Deputy Director Mikell. "That's why motorcyclists should avoid the use of alcoholic beverages before and during the operation of the motorcycle. There's an abnormally high occurrence of crashes, death and injury among motorcyclists when alcohol or drugs are added to the equation."

"So the target audience of our awareness campaign includes both vehicle drivers and motorcycle operators," says GOHS Director Dallas. "Our principle concerns are to increase driver recognition of motorcyclists in traffic, while at the same time encouraging motorcyclists to engage in the overall safe operation of their motorcycles."

To receive free brochures about "What You Need to Know About Motorcycle Safety" visit the GOHS website at www.gahighwaysafety.org. For more information about Georgia's Motorcycle Safety Awareness Program and how to help drivers and riders be more aware of each other while traveling in Georgia, contact Governor's Office of Highway Safety Program Planner Fred Huff at 404-651-8457.

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