



Wild Bill Law

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Motorcycle Helmet Use

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 20 states and the District of Columbia had laws on the books requiring all motorcyclists to wear helmets as of June 2006 (See chart below). In another 26 states only people under a specific age (mostly between 17 and 20 years of age) were required to wear helmets. Four states (Colorado, Illinois, Iowa and New Hampshire) had no helmet use laws.

According to NHTSA's National Occupant Protection Use Survey, a nationally representative observational survey, motorcycle helmet use rose to 51 percent in June 2006, from 48 percent in June 2005. Helmet use had been falling from a high of 71 percent in October 2000. Use rates remain lower in states that do not require all riders to use helmets. In June 2006, 68 percent of motorcyclists in states requiring helmet use wore them, compared with 37 percent of motorcyclists in states that do not. The survey counts only helmets that comply with Department of Transportation standards. Since 1997, five states have limited helmet laws to cover only young drivers. The latest, Pennsylvania, limits mandatory usage requirements to motorcycle drivers under the age of 20. But in August 2004 Louisiana reinstated its universal helmet law.

State	Universal Law (1)	Partial Law (1)
Alabama	X	
Alaska		17 and younger (2)
Arizona		17 and younger
Arkansas		20 and younger
California	X	
Colorado		
Connecticut		17 and younger
Delaware		18 and younger
District of Columbia	X	
Florida		20 and younger (3)

State	Universal Law (1)	Partial Law (1)
Georgia	X	
Hawaii		17 and younger
Idaho		17 and younger
Illinois		
Indiana		17 and younger
Iowa		
Kansas		17 and younger
Kentucky		20 and younger (3)(4)
Louisiana	X	
Maine		14 and younger (4)
Maryland	X	
Massachusetts	X	
Michigan	X	
Minnesota		17 and younger (4)
Mississippi	X	
Missouri	X	
Montana		17 and younger
Nebraska	X	
Nevada	X	
New Hampshire		
New Jersey	X	
New Mexico		17 and younger
New York	X	
North Carolina	X	
North Dakota		17 and younger (5)
Ohio		17 and younger (6)
Oklahoma		17 and younger
Oregon	X	
Pennsylvania		20 and younger (7)
Rhode Island		20 and younger (7)
South Carolina		20 and younger
South Dakota		17 and younger
Tennessee	X	
Texas		20 and younger

State	Universal Law (1)	Partial Law (1)
Utah		17 and younger
Vermont	X	
Virginia	X	
Washington	X	
West Virginia	X	
Wisconsin		17 and younger (2)
Wyoming		18 and younger

- (1) Universal laws cover all riders; partial laws cover young riders and/or some adult riders.
- (2) Alaska's motorcycle helmet use law covers passengers of all ages, operators younger than 19, and operators with instructional permits.
- (3) In Florida and Kentucky, the law requires that all riders younger than 21 years wear helmets, without exception. In Florida, those 21 years and older may ride without helmets only if they can show proof that they are covered by a medical insurance policy. Texas exempts riders 21 years or older if the either 1) can show proof of successfully completing a motorcycle operator training and safety course or 2) can show proof of having a medical insurance policy.
- (4) Motorcycle helmet laws in Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, and Wisconsin also cover operators with instructional/learner's permits. Maine's motorcycle helmet use law also covers passengers 14 years and younger and passengers if their operators are require to wear a helmet.
- (5) North Dakota's motorcycle helmet use law covers all operators traveling with operators who are covered by the law.
- (6) Ohio's motorcycle helmet use law covers all operators during the first year of licensure and all passengers of operators who are covered by the law.
- (7) Rhode Island's motorcycle helmet use law covers all operators during the first year of licensure and all passengers. Pennsylvania's motorcycle helmet use law covers all operators during the first two years of licensure unless the operator has completed the safety course approved by the department of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation.

Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Highway Loss Data Institute