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PRESS RELEASE

## **NMDOT, Law Enforcement and Safety Advocates Promote Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month**

Santa Fe - With motorcycle riding season officially under way, the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), New Mexico Department of Public Safety, and New Mexico Motorcycle Rights Organization urge all motorists to "share the road" during May 2012 Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month.

"As weather improves and riding increases with warmer weather, more motorcyclists are on the roads," said Transportation Secretary Alvin Dominguez. "With that in mind, passenger cars and trucks need to be attentive and make sure they share the road with one another. A motorcycle is one of the smallest vehicles on our roads therefore every driver needs to proactively look for them before changing lanes or merging with traffic."

Starting today and throughout the rest of the riding season, NMDOT would like to remind motorists to look out for motorcycles in an effort to help keep motorcyclists safe. Changing the driving habits of motorists and motorcyclists will help decrease the number of motorcycle fatalities and injuries in crashes. Motorcyclists are reminded to make sure that they are visible to motorists, and that they strictly follow the traffic laws.

"Whether you are traveling in a vehicle or riding on a motorcycle, safety should be the number one priority," said New Mexico State Police Chief Robert Shilling. "As we prepare for the summer months, motorists are reminded to watch for motorcycle traffic and obey all traffic laws, especially those pertaining to lane changes or to speed."

"Motorcycle Awareness Month is this May," said Annette Torrez, with the New Mexico Motorcycle Rights Organization. "Our goal is to educate both motorcyclists and motorists to be aware, not only during the month, but throughout the year. To lose even one life is unacceptable."

Motorcycle fatalities account for 13 percent of total fatalities within New Mexico in 2011. In addition, NMDOT traffic analysis stated almost all motorcyclists fatalities reported the number of crashes involving motorcyclists without helmets heavily outweighed those using helmets. DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration statistics show motorcyclists are about 39 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die in traffic crashes.

The NMDOT and NMDPS offer the following safe driving tips for drivers:

- Remember, a motorcycle is a vehicle with all the rights and privileges of any other motor vehicle;
- Always allow a motorcyclist the full lane width, never try to share a lane;
- Perform a visual check for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots before entering or exiting a lane of traffic, and at intersections;
- Always use your turn signal well before changing lanes or merging with traffic;
- Increase your following distance – three to four seconds – when behind a motorcycle so the motorcyclist has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency;
- Never tailgate;
- Never drive while distracted.

The NMDOT and NMDPS offer the following safe driving tips for motorcyclists:

- Making sure they are properly licensed;
- Avoid riding in poor weather conditions;
- Wear brightly colored protective gear and helmet;
- Using turn signals for every turn or lane change, even if the rider thinks no one will see it;
- Use reflective tape and stickers to increase conspicuity;
- Position themselves in the lane where they will be most visible to other drivers; and
- Never drive while impaired or distracted.

Additionally, in an effort to promote motorcycle safety awareness NMDOT and the New Mexico Motorcyclist Rights Organization invites the public to a free “Share the Road” Motorcycle Safety Awareness Event on Saturday, May 5, 2012 at Balloon Fiesta Park. For more information about this motorcycle awareness event visit: [www.sharingtheroadcincodemayobikeandcarshow.com](http://www.sharingtheroadcincodemayobikeandcarshow.com).

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