Alcohol a Factor in 29% of Fatal Motorcycle Collisions Between 2008 and 2012

Report Presented at RSA Academic Lecture Which Marks Beginning of Irish Road Safety Week

The fourth landmark Pre-Crash Report from the Road Safety Authority (RSA) has revealed that almost a third of motorcyclists involved in fatal collisions between 2008 and 2012 had consumed alcohol. The findings of the report were presented at the RSA Annual Academic Lecture today, the first event of Irish Road Safety Week which runs until Sunday 9 October.

983 fatal collisions occurred on Irish roads between 2008 and 2012, claiming the lives of 1,077 people. The RSA analysed An Garda Síochána Forensic Collision Investigation reports for 867 collisions in order to determine what caused or contributed to the collisions. Of these 867 collisions, 93 collisions involved a motorcyclist and claimed the lives of 96 people. A further 7 people were seriously injured.

The report revealed that:

- Speed was a contributory factor in 49% of the 93 fatal collisions involving a motorcyclist
- 54% of the fatal collisions involving a motorcyclist occurred in an 80km/h speed zone
- Almost one third (29%) of motorcyclists involved in fatal collisions had consumed alcohol, and almost half of these (45%) were four times or more above the current legal limit
- The presence of alcohol was most prevalent among 25-34 year olds
- 57% of the motorcyclists in fatal collisions who had consumed alcohol crashed on a Sunday. More motorcyclists with a presence of alcohol were in a fatal collision between 5pm and 6pm on a Sunday than any other time during the week.

Ms Moyagh Murdock, Chief Executive, Road Safety Authority said:

“While this report covers a period that saw the greatest reduction in road deaths since we began recording them in 1959, it does highlight worrying behaviour among motorcyclists, particularly where alcohol and speed are concerned. It’s critical that those who are seasoned bikers, as well as those who are new to this mode of transport, recognise their vulnerability on the roads and take appropriate measures, such as initial and advanced training, to ensure their safety. Other road-users also need to be aware of their responsibilities when sharing the roads with motorcyclists, particularly when exiting or entering a side road or turning right.”

Chief Superintendent Aidan Reid, An Garda Síochána said:

“It’s shocking that 28 motorcyclists involved in fatal collisions 2008 and 2012 had consumed alcohol. Motorcyclists are already among the most vulnerable of our road-users and the report clearly shows that when alcohol is involved, the consequences are fatal. Excessive and inappropriate speed was also a significant contributory factor to motorcycle fatalities in this period. What this tells us is that we need to make better choices when we use the roads, no matter what mode of transport we’re using. If you’re a motorcyclist, reduce your speed, wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment and high visibility gear, make yourself visible to other road-users and never ever drink and drive.”

The report also revealed that:
- Six counties - Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary - accounted for almost half (47%) of fatal motorcycle collisions
- 57% of collisions on a Saturday and 58% of collisions on a Sunday occurred between 12pm and 7pm
- April and July were the most dangerous months for motorcyclists, accounting for 16% and 15% respectively
- Of the 93 fatal collisions involving a motorcycle, the motorcyclist was deemed culpable in 72 collisions and part culpable in 8 collisions
- 98% (78) of the motorcyclists who were deemed culpable for the collision were male
- 30% of those culpable had no insurance and 15% did not hold a current motorcycle licence at the time of the collision
- 4 of the 6 pillion passengers killed were being driven by motorcyclists who had consumed alcohol.

Speaking about ‘Irish Road Safety Week’, Ms Murdock said:

“There are just three months left in the year to reverse the road fatality trend we have seen so far this year. Road-users in Ireland should be proud of the efforts they have made in recent years to make Ireland one of the safest countries in the EU. Now it is up to each and every one of us to step up our efforts and to strive to be the safest country in the world in terms of road safety. It is possible, but only if we work together to find ways to reduce the risk of death and injury on our roads. Find out what’s happening in your local community, get involved and play your part in saving lives and preventing serious injuries on our roads.”