

Wisconsin Driver Responsibility law to go into effect October 1, 2006

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After more than two years of hard work by motorcyclists the Drivers Responsibility act will go into effect October 1, 2006. This bill does a lot for motorcyclists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Most motorcyclists will know the red light rule change because it will affect them directly. If a motorcycle is stopped by an automated red light that cannot be triggered by the motorcycle, the motorcycle will be allowed to proceed after waiting for 45 seconds and when it is safe to do so without getting the green light. If you live in an urban area this will really come in handy especially in the late night and early morning hours when these automated lights are operational.

The bigger part of this is the increased penalties for drivers who cause injury and death. The new law provides for automatic increases in fines, up to \$1000, and suspension of driving privileges, motorist awareness classes, and jail time if a driver is cited for an infraction of driving rules that cause death or injury. This was started when Senator Janklow ran a stop sign at 70 mph killing a Minnesota motorcyclist and only received a 100 day jail term. This was a harsh penalty at the time. Most drivers only received the fine for running a stop sign.

The intent is a matter of education. If there is a stiffer penalty for bad driving we as drivers may think more when we are driving. Maybe we will even be able to get drivers to hang up the cell phone while driving. Drivers have lost the sense of responsibility while driving. We think we can eat, drink, read the paper or map, apply makeup, and shave while we driving in the car but this takes away from our concentration of driving. If a driver has something to lose they will gain a sense of responsibility.

This bill will also be applied to motorcycles as well. If you crash while riding and are ticketed for speeding or running a stop sign and you or your co-rider are injured you will also be hit with the high fines and suspensions. It is automatic so as motorcyclists we will also need to be responsible. It applies to all drivers.

This bill also provides for motorist awareness training in drivers education classes and will make this training mandatory for drivers who cause injury or death to motorcyclists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Doug Greenhalgh worked very hard on this section of the law and had lots of input on the intent of this section.

This bill also makes the motorcycle endorsement easier to get if it is done through a MSF beginners course.

This bill was written mostly by State Representative Mark Honadel and State Senator Dave Zeins's offices. The bill was passed by the Senate and Assembly last March and April and was signed by the Governor May 26th. The AMA has called this the most comprehensive bill for motorcyclist's protection signed this year in the country and fills the needs of their Justice for All program.