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BE CYCLE-LOGICAL FOR SAFER TRAVEL

By Kay Farrell, President/CEO, Greater Omaha Chapter of the National Safety Council

Around the country, there is a common transportation theme. Every year there is more traffic on the nation's streets and highways. Unfortunately, with more traffic comes an increase in traffic accidents and fatalities. In the United States more than 40,000 lives are lost each year as a result of motor vehicle crashes. Every accident has a multiplier effect – each results in medical expenses, insurance costs to repair vehicles, lost time at work and much more.

The past few years, we have seen a second trend emerging. More street and highway traffic is coming from motorcycles, and recently, motor scooters. Motorcycle and motor scooters are becoming increasingly popular, especially as gas prices continue to skyrocket. But these fuel efficient vehicles require a different set of driving skills, as well as additional safety considerations for other drivers who are not accustomed to watching for these two-wheeled forms of transportation.

The National Safety Council was founded in 1913 and congressionally chartered in 1953 to promote safety and protect the public health. Highway safety is one of our primary areas of focus. The Greater Omaha Chapter of the National Safety Council, in the area of Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, Washington and Pottawattamie counties, has worked very hard to promote safer highway travel for all forms of transportation.

This summer the Council is responding to a great need for education regarding motorcycle and scooters. Thanks to support from the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety, we're launching a new campaign, "Be Cycle-Logical", designed to target increased safety as it relates to motorcycle and scooter travel. When you consider the following sobering statistics provided by the Nebraska Department of Highway Safety, you can see why this is so important to all of us:

- The number of registered motorcycles has increased 46 percent to more than 43,000 in the past five years (2003-2007).
- During the same five-year period, the number of motorcyclists injured in a crash or collision has risen 33 percent.
- Last year, 44 percent of motorcycle/scooter crashes involved collisions with other vehicles.

That last statistic points out the need for one of the main components of the campaign. Motorcycle/scooter drivers, and those driving cars and trucks, must look twice when turning, changing lanes or passing another vehicle. Motorcycles can be hard to see when quickly glancing in a rearview mirror, and taking a second look helps avoid a serious accident and injury. The Council also recommends that drivers follow the '3-second rule' for following distance. The campaign has the support of dozens of elected officials and

law enforcement authorities, and was created with one primary goal in mind – reducing accidents on our streets and highways.

Recently the Council held the Liberty Safety Ride for motorcyclists to promote safe riding. To further promote safer highways, we even have an opportunity for all motorists to “Test Their Cycle-Logical IQ” with a quiz. It’s on our website, <http://www.safenebraska.org/safe-driving/cycle-logical-campaign.php>

As we enter the summer months, motorcycle and scooter ridership could be higher than at any other time in our state’s history. For those riding these smaller vehicles, and for drivers of cars and trucks, please drive carefully and be attentive to those around you. Let’s make this a safe summer travel season in Nebraska. Look again! Be Cycle-Logical!