

Motorbike Safety Campaign - Operation Octane

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A high profile campaign to crack down on motorcyclists who drive recklessly on Staffordshire's roads is set to enter its third phase this weekend.

Marked and unmarked police cars and bikes will be out in force across the county when stage three of Operation Octane is launched.

Safety camera vehicles will be clocking the speeds of motorcyclists and Staffordshire Police will be monitoring rider behaviour both on the ground and from the eye in the sky, its Air Support Unit.

Staffordshire County Council's road safety team will be linking up with Staffordshire Police to spearhead the initiative which aims to reduce the number of bikers who are killed or seriously injured in the area.

They are carrying out the campaign through the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership which Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service are also members of.

The latest figures show that motorcyclists account for around 22% of those killed or seriously injured on Staffordshire's roads despite the fact they only represent 1% of all road traffic.

Nine bikers were killed on the county's road network last year with a further 53 being seriously injured and 271 sustaining minor injuries.

Previous Operation Octane initiatives this year have seen more than 400 riders pulled over and offered road safety advice and no bikers reported to have been killed or seriously injured over the campaign periods.

Road safety champion county councillor Mike Maryon who is a motorcyclist himself said: "Bikers that ride sensibly with consideration for themselves and other road users have nothing to fear from this campaign. "However, people who ride recklessly, take unnecessary risks or carry out dangerous overtaking manoeuvres will be targeted. Offending bikers may be directed to an appropriate rider training course, face a fixed penalty notice or even prosecution. We want to make 2009 the safest year for bikers ever. With a commitment from riders and drivers to look after themselves and others, we have a real chance of achieving this."

Les Dyle, Traffic Management Officer at Staffordshire Police, added: "Operation Octane will target roads that have seen a high number motorcyclist deaths or injuries. These crashes are all too often caused by riders overtaking, travelling too close to other vehicles or at inappropriate speeds. We hope that this hard

hitting campaign will drive home the message that reckless riders won't be tolerated."