

High profile crackdown on reckless riders

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A high profile campaign to crack down on motorcyclists who ride recklessly in Staffordshire is set to take the roads this weekend.

Marked and unmarked police cars and bikes will be out in force across the county when the second Operation Octane of 2010 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 their eye in the sky, the 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.

The campaign is being co-ordinated through the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership which also includes Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The latest figures show that motorcyclists account for around 21% 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 in Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent last year with a further 59 being seriously injured and 289 sustaining minor injuries.

In 2009, Operation Octane initiatives saw more than 400 riders pulled over and offered biker safety tips, rider enhancement training and general road safety advice. The benefits of the campaign are clear as no bikers were reported to have been killed or seriously injured over the campaign weekends in May, July and August last year.

Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet member for Environment 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, those that 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 2010 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 Dyble, Traffic Management Officer at Staffordshire Police, added: "Operation Octane will target roads that have seen a high number of 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."

Ends