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HELMET USAGE BY MOTORCYCLE OPERATORS, BICYCLE OPERATORS AND THEIR PASSENGERS

The Johnson County Board of Health (JCBOH), in support of the Iowa Department of Transportation Zero Fatalities goal, has identified the use of helmets for motorcyclists and bicyclists as an effective public health intervention which will save lives, decrease injuries and save health care costs for Iowans. The Board of Health encourages all riders to use helmets and also recommends that State legislators enact laws requiring the universal use of helmets for motorcycle and bicycle operation. In addition, the Board supports public health messaging to raise awareness of the protections provided by helmet usage. The Board has determined the following:

- Head injuries resulting from a motorcycle or bicycle accident contain a great risk for disability and death. Brain injury can temporarily or permanently impair a person's physical, cognitive or behavioral functions.
- Helmets decrease the likelihood of death and brain injuries from motorcycle crashes by 37-42 percent.
- In 2015, around half a million bicyclists suffered from emergency treated injuries in the US. In Iowa, 58 percent of the head injuries in the age group of 5-14 years were attributed to bicycle accidents and 84 percent of those who were injured were not wearing helmets.
- From 2014 to 2018, there were 204 motorcycle crashes in Iowa resulting in 211 fatalities (seven of which were passengers); 76 percent of those involved in these crashes did not wear helmets.
- Fatalities and disabilities caused by head injuries resulting from motorcycle and bicycle accidents cost the US nearly \$44 billion annually with Iowa's share of that cost at \$64 million annually.

Universal helmet laws are extremely effective; 97 percent of motorcyclists observed in states with universal helmet laws wore helmets. In states without such laws, of which Iowa is one, helmet use was observed at 48 percent. As the JCBOH considers helmet usage as a public health concern, the Board endorses laws that encourage the use of helmets while riding motorcycles and bicycles in order to achieve the elimination of road fatalities and injuries that could be prevented by helmet use.

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