

ADVISORY: HEAT STRESS and MOTORCYCLE HELMETS

“...burden on society...hyperthermic brain injury is the third largest killer in the World...”

April 29, 2007, Janice, [BIKERS USA](#)

In many states, hot weather is here. It certainly is in North Carolina! It is a great time for motorcycle riding, but in the coming months, it will get so hot that you may become irritable. Irritability during hot weather is just one of many signs that you may be suffering a form of heat stress. If you wear a helmet, you should be particularly careful, because helmets are usually made of a non-permeable material which does not allow heat dissipation.

Heat stress is a buildup of body heat generated either internally by muscle use or externally by the environment. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke result when the body is overwhelmed by heat. As the heat increases, body temperature and the heart rate rise painlessly. An increase in body temperature of two degrees Fahrenheit can affect mental functioning. A five degree Fahrenheit increase **can result in serious illness or death**. During hot weather, heat illness may be **an underlying cause of other types of injuries, such as heart attacks, falls and equipment accidents**.

The most serious heat related illness is heat stroke. The symptoms are confusion, irrational behavior, convulsions, coma, and death. While over 20% of heat stroke victims die regardless of health or age, children seem to be more susceptible to heat strain than adults. In some cases, the side effects of heat stroke are **heat sensitivity and varying degrees of brain and kidney damage**.

Source: CDC www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs/d001701-d001800/d001702/d001702.html

BURDEN ON SOCIETY

“In terms of clinical **burden on the society** and number of deaths occurring due to heat illness, **hyperthermic brain injury is the third largest killer in the World** after the cardiovascular and traumatic insults to the central nervous system (CNS). In spite of the seriousness of this problem, studies regarding effects of heat on the CNS are largely ignored.”

Source: Indian Journal of Medical Research, May 2005, H.S. Sharma, University Hospital, Uppsala University, Sweden. <http://www.icmr.nic.in/ijmr/2005/May/editorial1.pdf>

A few years ago, a national television news channel commented that motorcyclists are a “burden on society”. This caused a huge uproar, and many motorcyclists, including the author, permanently boycotted their national news. It also fueled the helmet lobby to use the “burden on society” theme to call for a steadfastness refusal to allow bikers to make their own informed decision. Activists for choice now have a medically based “burden on society” response.

BIKERS USA has not yet been able to find a reputable, published medical report related to **Heat Stress and Motorcycle Helmets** but suggests that you think twice before putting that helmet on yourself and your children, in hot weather. You know to **never lock your children or pets in locked cars with windows rolled up**. Similarly, helmets prevent heat from dissipating, and feels the same, particularly if a helmet is black or another dark color. The reduced heat dissipation caused by helmets is especially felt while at a stop, and in slow moving traffic.

Please use this CDC Heat Stress Search for more information and many related publications:

www.cdc.gov/search.do?queryText=heat+stress&searchButton.x=38&searchButton.y=9&action=search

Please spread the word!

[BIKERS USA](#) respects your right to wear a helmet, and believes informed riders should be allowed to choose. Check state laws before riding lidless. Always ride sober, safely, and watch out for crazy cagers and suvers.

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