

INFORMATION BULLETIN
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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

B.C.'S MOTOR VEHICLE ACT TO CHANGE

VICTORIA – The Province introduced a number of changes to the Motor Vehicle Act (MVA) today to enhance road safety and streamline administrative processes.

New rules for motorcyclists and their passengers – In response to a growing number of motorcyclists in B.C., and a corresponding rise in the number of fatalities, all motorcycle drivers and their passengers will be required to wear a helmet that meets certified safety-industry standards. Drivers will be responsible for ensuring that passengers under the age of 16 are wearing an approved helmet. Unapproved helmets will be subject to potential seizure by police.

Inexperience is a high-risk factor for new riders while learning, so they will be restricted to less powerful motorcycles. These restrictions are to be determined and will be set out in regulations. To ensure that passengers, including those under 16 are protected while on a motorcycle, they must be able to position their feet on foot pegs or floor boards.

In 2008, the Office of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles began an extensive review of motorcycle safety in B.C. in partnership with the B.C. Coroner's Service, ICBC and police. The review found that the number of fatalities each year has increased from 27 in 1999 to 49 in 2008 as the number of riders grew from about 41,000 to 80,000 during that period. New motorcyclists in the 16-25 age group are the most at risk with a fatality rate that is 13 times higher than older riders.

Driver fitness tests – A change to the MVA will help health-care professionals by clarifying the medical conditions or impairments that affect someone's ability to drive, and must be reported to the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles. Occupational therapists and nurse practitioners have also been added to the current list of psychologists, optometrists and medical practitioners who have a duty and authority to report under the act. To further enhance road safety, the exemption for not wearing a seat belt for a medical reason is being discontinued, as current medical advice is that there are no medical reasons to not wear a seatbelt. The medical community, including the BC Medical Association, were extensively consulted on the changes being introduced today.

Driver's licences for agricultural workers – A change to the MVA will extend the current six-month limit on "home country" driver's licences for seasonal agricultural workers to a maximum of one year. Currently, these workers can drive in the province for up to six months before being required to obtain a B.C. Driver's Licence.

Additional changes to the MVA dealing with impaired driving and B.C.'s vehicle impoundment program are highlighted in a news release at http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2010PSSG0026-000472.htm.

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Media Contact: Public Affairs Bureau
 Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
 250 356-6961

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