

Statement received by the AMA June 9, 2010 from the Utah Highway Patrol

Thank you for your correspondence to the Utah Highway Patrol. I've been asked to reply to your concerns regarding the traffic checkpoint on Sunday, May 30th in Tooele County. First let me apologize for any inconvenience we may have caused you or anyone attending the racing event on Sunday afternoon. We had targeted Memorial Day Weekend to do our best to keep the number of fatalities in Utah down. We identified three factors which lead to many deaths in Utah and wanted to try and make an impact on these factors. The areas we were focusing on were DUI enforcement, occupant restraint and motorcycle education. On Friday and Saturday night the Highway Safety Office conducted a DUI checkpoint in Utah and Davis Counties with the Utah Highway Patrol participating. On Sunday a motorcycle checkpoint was conducted in Tooele County.

The intent of the checkpoint was to redirect as many motorcycles as there were officers participating (7-10), to the side and have a brief (a few minutes) discussion about motorcycle safety issues such as proper displacement, helmets, equipment, and safety of the motorcycle. If 7-10 motorcycles were pulled over then all other motorcycles and passenger vehicles were allowed to travel through without interruption as well. It appears that many motorcycles did not understand they could travel through and stopped. According to the operations plan this was not suppose to create a burden for motorists and was not to be time consuming for motorcycle operators. The checkpoint started at 3 PM and went well for over an hour until the major event ended and a tremendous volume of traffic hit the checkpoint around 4:30 PM. We obviously underestimated the number of vehicles and created an unexpected large back up for motorists. When it became apparent the checkpoint was creating a large traffic backup it was opened immediately. At 5:12 PM the all signs were pulled out of the road and the checkpoint was in the beginning stages of being taken down. It was then determined that because of the amount of traffic, it would create a burden to the public, and the checkpoint was not re-established and canceled for the remainder of the night.

Please forgive us for our oversight. It was certainly not our intent to bring a negative aspect to the tremendous event being held in Tooele County, or to our state. Our intention was to educate riders on safety issues and try our best to reduce the rising rate of deaths on Utah roadways from motorcycle riders. The rate of deaths of Utah motorcycle riders is the only fatality rate which is increasing while every other category is decreasing. We would never do anything intentionally to put a negative spin on such an event as this. It was an honest attempt to try and focus on motorcycle operator's safety. Please rest assured, this has been a learning experience for our agency and it will not happen again.

Sincerely,

Sgt. David Moreno  
Utah Highway Patrol