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(SD)-The 79th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally Is Underway

By: John Axtell Posted at: 08/02/2019 10:21 AM

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) - The 79th annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally begins today and runs through next Sunday, but the number of riders passing through our region has been increasing for the past several days.

With at least 450,000 riders and others expected to visit Sturgis at some point of the Rally, local and state officials have taken a variety of steps to prepare.

The South Dakota Dept of Transportation, for example, has lowered speed limits and installed stop signs or traffic lights at a number of locations in and around Sturgis.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is temporarily shifting additional troopers to the Blacks Hills, while 8 officers from local agencies in Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota as well as South Dakota have been sworn in as temporary Pennington County Sheriff's deputies in Wall, Keystone, and Hill City.

Chief Deputy Willie Whelchell told KOTA-TV that the new deputies will be easy to spot because they'll be wearing bright yellow shirts and doing foot patrols to provide help to anyone who needs it.

Deputy Whelchell and other officials are reminding drivers and motorcycle riders alike to use extreme caution during the Rally and for drivers to pay special attention to their vehicle's blind spots that could hide the presence of motorcycles.