

Motorcycle Safety Article

First of all let's get one thing clear. A motorcycle is not an unsafe mode of transportation. The main components that make a motorcycle unsafe are the Buns and Brains that occupy the seat and man the controls. The most abused and less used is that 6 inch space between the ears.

An untrained or self trained motorcycle rider is a crash waiting to happen. We all have heard the saying, "There are 2 types of motorcycle riders." "The ones who have been down and the ones that are going down." This omen can be reduced and possibly prevented through training and repeated practice of that training every time one rides.

Learning to multi-task is essential to the safe operation of a motorcycle. A rider must use 5 human components at the same time to be in total control of a motorcycle. The coordination of the Head, Eyes, Clutch, Throttle and Brakes are the key.

The head has to be alert and moving at all times. From looking ahead to scanning the mirrors and over the shoulders to make sure that what was seen in the mirrors is not the only thing beside you or behind you. Never ride when taking drugs or alcohol that can alter your clear thought process, blur your vision or delay your reaction time.

The eyes are always looking for anything that can be a possible threat, which is every other vehicle near or approaching you. Animals and pedestrians are also included. 90% of what goes into the brain comes in through your eyes. Keep your eyes moving at all times. Eye Targeting is the best of the eyes. This is simply looking ahead to where you want to go and not just ahead of where you are. On long rides, be aware of Target Fixation also known as Tunnel Vision. Most of you recognize these 2 as the Dead Stare from fatigue. The average human, paying attention has a 1.5 second reaction time. It takes the eyes $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second to send the picture to the brain. It takes an additional $\frac{3}{4}$ second for the brain to send the reaction to the body parts to move. Any object moves 1.466 feet per second, per mile per hour. A motorcycle traveling at just 40 mph covers an approximate 60

feet per second. 1.5 seconds of reaction time would be 90 feet of distance. Now factor in the wear of the tires and brakes and how effectively you use your brakes. The total stopping distance is almost double that 90 feet of reaction time. This does not include weather, road conditions or the type of roadway you are traveling on. In reduced lighting or at night, the vision is reduced and reaction times are increased. Always reduce your speed when your vision has been reduced.

The clutch, throttle and brake are controlled by the hands. Many times the 2 hands have to be synchronized in movement with each other and all 3 may be used at the same time. Knowing how much of which one at the same time is very critical in the smooth and safe operation of a motorcycle.

Whether I am riding my motorcycle or driving my vehicle, I continuously ask myself 4 questions. They are "What if", "What Can I," "Where Can I" and "Am I."

"What If" that vehicle approaching the stop sign or traffic signal does not stop? What if that approaching driver does not see and recognize my vehicle? What if that approaching vehicle from my rear does not stop if I am stopped? Add your own What Ifs to this. These are just some of the "What Ifs."

"What Can I Do" to make me and the motorcycle more visible to everyone. Head lights on bright or all my lights are on. Wear bright clothing especially at night or when the visibility is reduced. What can I do to avoid being involved if a crash is possible? What can I do to reduce the crash impact? What can I do to reduce my injuries or the possibility of death? What training can I get to make be a more efficient and safer rider?

"Where Can I Go" to prevent a possible crash? Where can I go to make me and the motorcycle more visible to everyone? Where can other vehicles be going that will create a hazard for me? Add your own to these.

"Am I" riding at a safe speed? Am I alert and aware? Am I visible to everyone? Am I riding in another vehicle's blind spot? Am I prepared to make an evasive move to avoid a potential crash? You can add more "Am I's."

The majority of motorcycle riders before today's current licensing requirements were self trained. That training came at the cost of a lot of mistakes, crashes, broken bones, road rash and permanent disfigurements and loss of limbs. Today's required training to obtain a motorcycle license or endorsement is just basic. A motorcycle has capabilities that most operators are unaware of. Additional or advanced training should be sought by every motorcycle operator. Having said that, there are 2 types of motorcycle owners. There are Riders and there are Operators. Riders are untrained and Operators are trained and in control of their motorcycles.

Use that 6 inches between your ears at all times. Get additional training and become a safer motorcycle operator. I offer additional training to the members of Chapter XXIX at no cost. If your chapter is close, I offer the same to you.

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