

Reader Letters

I received the following letter (slightly modified for entertainment purposes).

Dear Education Dude,

On a recent ride my husband and I experienced severe cross winds on the highway. The locals described it as an especially windy day with wind gusts up to about 70 MPH. It was nearly impossible to keep the bikes in our respective lanes not to mention the difficulty that the cars were experiencing. Thankfully we made it through this near death white knuckle ride safely. What is the best way to manage wind gusts of this magnitude on a motorcycle?

Sincerely,
Blown Away

Dear Blown Away,

The best way to manage wind gusts of 70 MPH is to **not** be on a motorcycle.

Oh sure, we've all been taken by surprise by a quick gust of wind, and that is when your counter-steering skills really come into play. I've experienced strong side-winds while riding across the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and I just had to lean the bike into the wind in order to keep riding straight across the bridge.

But if you're experiencing a lot of wind gusts, and you see that even the cars are not handling it well, I'd say it's time to take cover for a while. This could mean finding a coffee shop to sit in for a while, or if you're out in the middle of nowhere, you might need to look for an overpass or something to help shield the bike. You may even want to lay bike on its side in order to prevent the wind from blowing it over and causing damage. You might want to roll it part of the way into a recessed median or side gully to try to get below the level of the wind while you wait it out.

If, for some reason, you decide that you would rather risk your life riding in the wind than waiting it out, then the basic tips for any untoward weather apply: slow down and keep a sharp eye. Slow down so that any gust is less likely to send you careening into other traffic at high speeds, and you have a better chance of recovering from the blow. Some people are tempted to ride faster, mistakenly thinking that gives them better stability. You need to ride at a pace that the bike is manageable and not just falling over. But you also need to remember that the faster you ride, the farther off track you'll be blown when that wind hits you. Keep it down to a manageable pace so that you have ample time to recover and stay within your lane. And keep a sharp eye out for signs of wind coming, and for things that alter the flow of the wind such as trees, buildings, big trucks, etc. which may cause swirls or sudden drops in wind. The scariest part of my trip across the Tacoma Narrows Bridge that windy day was when I passed the big uprights that supported the bridge, and the wind suddenly stopped blowing there. I had been leaning the bike over so far to keep it going straight, that when there was no wind blowing against me as I passed the uprights, the bike started to fall over. That'll make you pucker, let me tell you.

And remember that riding in the wind is much, **much** more fatiguing, so take more frequent rest stops to let your muscles relax and to re-hydrate yourself. The wind is not only trying to blow you over, but it's also trying to whip away all your moisture.

Ride Safe!

The Education Dude