

Be Seen, Be Safe . . . it is up to you.

How many times have you thought to yourself, “That person in the car did not see me and nearly hit me!” You may have even directed some choice words toward the “offending” person. While I am all for righteous indignation, you may want ask yourself a question, “Did I do enough to make myself seen by the motorist?” I have this idea that we as motorcyclists have our own responsibility to be seen. After all, the laws of physics say that motorcyclists usually come out on the losing side when we tangle with cars and trucks.

What I hope this article will provide are some techniques that may help you be seen **and** recognized by others sharing the road and to encourage you, as a rider, to be **responsible for being seen rather than expecting motorists to see you.**

There are many thoughts and theories about why motorists do not see motorcyclists. Some I have seen are:

- Motorcycles are not as big as the vehicles around us, so they do not register in the motorists mind;
- Motorcycles move differently so motorist do not see us because they are not used to the way we travel;
- Sometimes motorcyclists ride in motorists’ blind spots.

In the next few paragraphs, I will offer you some tips and techniques to help you become more visible to others on the road.

Wear Bright Colors

While it is cool to be dressed all in dark colors when you ride, you are reducing the chances that motorists will see you. Wearing dark colors can make you disappear into the shadows, trees and other non-threatening bits of landscape out in the background of motorists’ vision. In addition, even multicolored clothes can break up your contour and may act as camouflage to motorists, which makes it harder for them to see you.

So what should you wear? The best are bright yellows and whites; you may even want to consider neon greens and yellows. Karla Edwards uses them to great effect. Wearing bright colored helmets are another way to be seen; white is best. I know they do not reflect the biker image, but why follow the herd? Be a rugged individualist.



Make your Bike Brighter

The easiest way to do that is to turn your high beams on during the day. They make you much more visible to those in your threat zone (the 10 o'clock to the 2 o'clock positions). There are some theories that suggest the motorist sees you as a larger vehicle and will give you more room.



What about Night Visibility?

So far, I have discussed coping tactics for day riding, but few of these are helpful at night. In this section, I will suggest some ideas that may help at night. Use your driving lights and if you do not have them, consider installing PIAA type lights. You also may want to consider putting running lights and a pulsating brake light on the rear of your bike. They can be attention getters. If you want proof of that, ride behind Bob Spencer for a while and see for yourself. For the least expensive, yet highly effective way to be seen at night is to invest in reflective stick-on reflector panels for your bike and riding gear.



Riding Techniques:

This may sound simple, but avoid riding in motorists' blind spots. It is an easy thing to do. If you cannot see the driver in his mirrors, he cannot see you. Another straightforward way to become more visible is to position yourself in the lane where you are likely to be in the view of as many motorists as possible. Since there is no "right" answer about where to ride in a lane, we will discuss that during our next chapter meeting. Lastly, avoid jackrabbit starts and stops giving motorists time to recognize you as a motorcycle.

As I review this article, there are no big "aha" ideas. It simply comes down to you as the rider making good decisions about how you want to "look" to motorists. Be assertive about your right to the road and think about ways to make yourself more visible to others; it is as simple as that. If you think about these tips each time you ride, you will have a safer and more enjoyable experience.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Art Friedman and Cruiser Magazine, where I got much of the information for this article.

Ride safe and ride well.

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