

May - - Motorcycle Awareness Month

As the weather gets warmer and drier, the number of motorcycles on the road increases significantly. Unfortunately, so does the number of car/motorcycle accidents. As a response to these statistics, the motorcycle safety world makes May its "Motorcycle Awareness Month." Not only does the awareness month help riders to think about the things they need to do to get ready to ride safely, but it also helps motorists learn to coexist safely with motorcycles.

In the spirit of awareness, I am going to piggy back on last month's article about visibility by discussing how to 'read' other motorists as they deal with distractions. In the following excerpted column from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Website, you will find what a typical driver deals with on a day to day basis. While none of the information will probably be new to you, I think it might give you some reminders about what to look for when riding . . .

General Distractions

In a study conducted by Liverpool Victoria Insurance, "Driven to distraction by our children," drivers reported loss of concentration when driving due to:

- Children
- Hand-held mobile phones
- Using audio entertainment
- Eating and drinking while driving
- Using satellite navigation

Cell Phones

A University of Utah study, "A Comparison of the Cell Phone Driver and the Drunk Driver, found that "...the impairments associated with using a cell phone while driving can be as profound as those associated with driving while drunk." Furthermore, the impairment levels were similar whether the cell phones were used in handheld or hands-free mode.

Turn Signal Use

Perhaps no study symbolizes the lack of thoughtfulness on the road more than one conducted by Response Insurance. They found that 57% of drivers admitted they don't use their turn signal when changing lanes. Their reasons:

- They don't have time (47%)
- They're too lazy to bother (23%)
- Fear of forgetting to turn it off (17%)
- Too busy changing lanes a lot to use it (11%)
- Adds excitement to driving (7%) (*Editor Note: what were they thinking?*)

The Vatican Weighs In

No wonder even the Vatican has called for a return to sanity behind the wheel. They've put their advice in the form of the following "Ten Commandments for Drivers" and we present them here not to endorse any particular religion but to demonstrate the universal concern over the needless waste of human life in traffic collisions:

1. You shall not kill.
2. The road shall be for you a means of communion between people and not of mortal harm.
3. Courtesy, uprightness and prudence will help you deal with unforeseen events.
4. Be charitable and help your neighbor in need, especially victims of accidents.
5. Cars shall not be for you an expression of power and domination and an occasion of sin.
6. Charitably convince the young and not so young not to drive when they are not in a fitting condition to do so.
7. Support the families of accident victims.
8. Bring guilty motorists and their victims together, at the appropriate time, so that they can undergo the liberating experience of forgiveness.
9. On the road, protect the more **vulnerable party**.
10. Feel responsible toward others.

All these principles can be boiled down to this paraphrase of the Golden Rule: Drive near others, as you would have others drive near you

Also in the spirit of awareness, I have taken the liberty of sharing a "Top Ten" list provided by MSF about what drivers should consider while sharing the road with motorcyclists. Please share this with your friends, coworkers or anyone else who may gain some insight to the ways motorcycles use the roadways differently than cars and trucks.

By the way, one of the best ways to make people aware of motorcyclists is for motorcyclists to make a connection with individuals. A cool thing happens, other motorists don't just see bikes, they see PEOPLE on bikes. It is an incredible transformation. . . . and makes it safer for us too. So please take the time to print and post one or two of the flyers found below around your workplace. You may even want hand them out to the friends who tell you that they really don't get what motorcyclists are doing out there.

Ride safe and ride well,

Bob Reagle, Chapter E Educator



Ten Things All Car & Truck Drivers Should Know About Motorcycles

from Motorcycle Safety Foundation

- 1** Over half of all fatal motorcycle crashes involve another vehicle. Most of the time, the motorist, not the motorcyclist, is at fault. There are a lot more cars and trucks than motorcycles on the road, and some drivers don't "recognize" a motorcycle - they ignore it (usually unintentionally).
- 2** Because of its small size, a motorcycle can be easily hidden in a car's blind spots (door/roof pillars) or masked by objects or backgrounds outside a car (bushes, fences, bridges, etc). Take an extra moment to look for motorcycles, whether you're changing lanes or turning at intersections.
- 3** Because of its small size, a motorcycle may look farther away than it is. It may also be difficult to judge a motorcycle's speed. When checking traffic to turn at an intersection or into (or out of) a driveway, predict a motorcycle is closer than it looks.
- 4** Motorcyclists often slow by downshifting or merely rolling off the throttle, thus not activating the brake light. Allow more following distance, say 3 or 4 seconds. At intersections, predict a motorcyclist may slow down without visual warning.
- 5** Motorcyclists often adjust position within a lane to be seen more easily and to minimize the effects of road debris, passing vehicles, and wind. Understand that motorcyclists adjust lane position for a purpose, not to be reckless or show off or to allow you to share the lane with them.
- 6** Turn signals on a motorcycle usually are not self-canceling, thus some riders (especially beginners) sometimes forget to turn them off after a turn or lane change. Make sure a motorcycle's signal is for real.
- 7** Maneuverability is one of a motorcycle's better characteristics, especially at slower speeds and with good road conditions, but don't expect a motorcyclist to always be able to dodge out of the way.
- 8** Stopping distance for motorcycles is nearly the same as for cars, but slippery pavement makes stopping quickly difficult. Allow more following distance behind a motorcycle because it can't always stop "on a dime."
- 9** When a motorcycle is in motion, see more than the motorcycle - see the person under the helmet, who could be your friend, neighbor, or relative.
- 10** If a driver crashes into a motorcyclist, bicyclist, or pedestrian and causes serious injury, the driver would likely never forgive himself/herself