

HANDLING CURVES

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Greetings, all!

I have been asked to fill in for Lee with a safety article for this month. I will give it a shot, but it is safe to say that I am no Lee!

You may be aware already that the greatest number of crashes for motorcyclists occur at intersections and in curve negotiation. Intersection crashes generally involve other motorist, as it is a place for lots of conflict. There is traffic to the left of you, traffic to the right of you, traffic coming toward you, and traffic coming up behind you.

We won't even talk about pedestrians and bicyclists! So, what can you do as a motorcyclist? First, recognize that all that vehicles around you are a potential hazard to you. As you are approaching an intersection, slow down and be prepared to take evasive action. You can do this by covering the controls to reduce reaction time. Keep your head on a swivel and look at all the traffic in the intersection.

Make certain that they are doing what they are required to do such as stop at the appropriate location, yield to those who have the right of way, obey the appropriate speed limit, etc. If they are not doing these things, they are a greater hazard to you. Once you have determined others are operating their vehicles appropriately, then it is safe for you to cross the intersection. Intersections are hazardous because you cannot control the actions of others, only your actions.

What about curves, where it is just you, the road, and your machine? Curves present a problem to motorcyclists when they lose their respect for them or overestimate their abilities. Want proof? Watch some videos from the Tail of the Dragon! You may remember the expression, "Slow, Look, Press, Roll" if you have attended any Motorcycle Safety Foundation training. For those who have not and those who forgot, let me take this opportunity to break it down.

Slow means to roll off the throttle as you near the curve for two reasons, to be able to see any hazard in the curve when you get to the look portion and so you can speed up when you get to the roll portion.

LOOK means to look through the curve. Look for any hazards including road conditions and traffic. Determine what type of curve it is: constant radius, decreasing radius, or increasing radius.

Press on the handgrip in the direction of the turn. Turning left? Press on the left handgrip. That will start the motorcycle to lean toward the direction you want to turn.

Roll on the throttle. Your motorcycle will be stable in the curve under power, so you want to maintain your speed or even increase it slightly. You should select your path of travel to use while negotiating the curve, the middle-middle-middle path, which provides a safety margin to your left and right or the outside-inside-outside path of travel. This will allow you to decrease the radius or your path of travel in the curve but puts you closer to the centerline of the roadway in the event there is oncoming traffic. It leaves less of a margin for error in the event an approaching vehicle is over the centerline. See the illustration below.

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