

SAFETY CORNER

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Let's Talk Traction

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We all know the big, obvious road hazards. If there's a massive patch of loose gravel in a turn or a giant pothole, your eyes lock onto it, your brain registers the danger, and you steer clear. We're good at that.

But today, I want to talk about the **hidden traction killers**—the advanced surface hazards that look harmless but can easily take a bike out from under you if you aren't ready for them.

There are three specific ones I want us all scanning for on today's ride:

First up: **Tar snakes**. You know those black, rubbery lines where road crews patched up cracks in the asphalt? When it's cool and dry, they're fine. But on hot summer afternoons, that tar melts into a greasy, slick mess. If you lean hard into a curve and hit a mid-corner tar snake, your suspension is going to wallow and your tires will skip. In the wet, they are flat-out ice.

Second: **Steel construction plates and bridge decks**. When you ride into a construction zone and see those massive metal plates on the ground, or when we cross an open-grid metal bridge, your traction drops significantly. If it's raining, that steel offers almost zero grip.

And third: The first 15 minutes of rain. When a storm first hits, that light drizzle mixes with the months of leaked oil, grease, and road dust that have settled into the pores of the asphalt. It creates a nasty, invisible film. It actually takes about 15 to 20 minutes of heavy downpour to completely wash that slime off the road.

So, how do we handle these? It comes down to three rules:

Keep it upright: If you see tar snakes or a steel plate ahead in a turn, alter your line before you get there so you can cross the hazard with the bike as vertical as possible. Less lean angle means less demand for side grip.

Smooth inputs: No sudden braking, no aggressive downshifting, and no pinning the throttle while you are actively on top of the hazard. Maintain a steady, neutral throttle.

Look through it: This is the hardest one. When the bike steps out a fraction of an inch on a tar snake, your instinct is to look straight down at it. Don't. Keep your eyes up, look exactly where you want the bike to go, and let the motorcycle's natural geometry settle itself out.

Let's look out for each other out there today. If you're leading a pack and spot a bad patch of tar snakes or a slick bridge deck, point it out early with a foot or a hand signal so the riders behind you have time to adjust their lines.

Stay sharp, keep your eyes moving, and let's have a great ride. Thanks guys.

