

SAFETY CORNER

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Expect the Unexpected

Greetings All! Welcome to November! Cool, crisp autumn mornings? Downright cold !

You may even spot a patch of frost on an overpass this month! Be careful out there!

In keeping with "expect the unexpected ", I'd like to point out a few things to help us all avoid becoming a statistic.

How to avoid a car that turned left in front of you? Part of your job as a motorcyclist is to develop a precognitive sixth sense. Look for signs that may indicate that a vehicle is going to turn. That one car just parked in the left lane, no turn signal flashing, that's too easy! There may be a break in traffic and the driver may not see you approaching! Cover your brakes and prepare for evasive action! Yes, you do need to take something as innocuous as a car waiting in a turn lane as an immediate danger to your life! Once the threat has been identified, you can work through levels of severity.

is the driver clearly able to see you?

is the driver looking at you? (I'm not a fan of blackened windows).

which way are the steer tires pointing? Look at the wheels, not the vehicle. That will be your first clue of movement. While you're sizing up all this, be aware of what's behind and beside you! Should you need to take evasive action, you'll need an escape route! It's no fun having an SUV hit you from behind after you were able to avoid that turning car! You shouldn't lay the bike down. Your best chance of survival will be losing as much speed as possible before the collision. You'll do that using both brakes with the bike upright. Even if you only lose 10 or 20 mph, it could mean the difference between going home or not.

A vehicle moves over into your space! Our bikes fit easily into their blind spot, and drivers looking for cars aren't psychologically programmed to look for motorcycles. How to avoid it?

be aware of where blind spots lie. I mention this often - if you can't see them in their mirror, they don't see you. Even if you do see them, that's not a guarantee that they're even looking!

beware of situations where lane changes become more possible. Maybe there's a car on the shoulder up ahead or an accident blocking a lane. Maybe the left or right lane comes to an end. People there will be jockeying for position in order not to be behind that big truck!

The street is slippery! As long as you have decent tires, and they're not worn out, you'd be surprised at how well a motorcycle does on wet roads. Remember to slow down and be gentle on the controls. When raining, manhole covers become very slippery as do white cross walk and stop line markings. Look out for oil and diesel on the surface also. Look for patches of rainbow on the roadway and avoid riding through it if at all possible. If it hasn't rained in a while, the first hour or so is the most treacherous. The rain lifts all the oil out of the pavement, floating it to the top. Avoid riding in the center of the lane where all the oily drippings collect! Be aware of the limited visibility the rain creates. There are still many drivers who do not turn their headlamps on in the rain!

Finally, the most common bike accident involves alcohol. Could be the motorcycle operator or the other driver. We're rapidly entering the holiday season. Reader beware!

It is my hope that what I present here will be of help when out on the road.

As always, I welcome your questions and comments.

Dave

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Safety is of the Lord
Proverbs 21:31