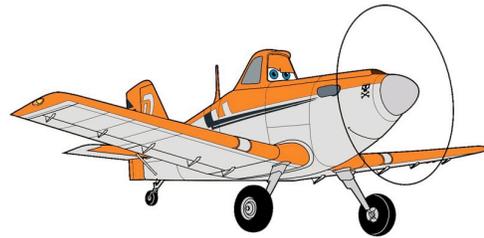


Nothing in Particular, Just Everything- Steve Warmath, Safety Officer



Over the course of the last two years, I have presented and posted Safety Articles covering a variety of subjects, lessons learned and the care and feeding of our chromed-out treasures. I wonder sometimes what else there is to talk about. Let's see..... I could dive into deeper detail regarding maintenance, accessories or other minutia, but I'm not going to this time. What I want to convey in this article is more of a safety mindset that I have gained by being the Safety Officer and by researching articles and hearing suggestions from the members. (I have to admit, the motorcycle-eating dog story was rather interesting) This is a mindset every safety conscious rider should develop and maintain to manage the risks associated with riding a motorcycle. Some will, others won't. That decision will determine which rung of the risk ladder you will land on.

Whenever I go into the garage and open the overhead door and see our two gleaming bikes sitting there waiting to be awakened to the open road, the safety mindset process begins for me. It's very much like (this is the pilot in me) pulling your aircraft out of the hangar, doing your preflight and getting your mind right to fly and leave the "surly bonds of earth".



There are many physical and physiological factors to wrap your noodle around during this process. There is the mechanical condition of the machine. Have you done your preflight? Is it ready to go? Is it day or night, hot or cold? Precipitation, fog? Am I going it alone or with a group? How do I feel? Tired, head cold, sore back, feet, arms, neck, headache? All this to consider and we are still sitting on the tarmac. The point to all of this is obviously, that you have to make a lot of decisions before you hit the road. It's going to be "a jungle out there" so why start off already handicapped by poor choices made in the process outlined above.

Riding safely requires a lot of attention by the rider; 360 degrees, 24/7. Situational awareness is absolutely critical. Now I'm not talking about being a totally paranoid rider. That would not be much fun or very relaxing. I'm talking about paying attention. Did you ever have a car pass you on the road and you didn't even know they were coming? I know of a motorcycle accident, luckily, non-life threatening, where the rider dozed off and failed to negotiate a curve. That's a bit too relaxed, but it can happen. Group riding also involves a certain degree of being mindful of the other rider's safety as well as your own.

Yeah, I hear it too. "Motorcycles are dangerous." They can be if you don't respect the many factors that go along with riding them and exercising the proper level of risk management. There will always be bone-headed drivers doing stupid things. Remember the old saying "Speed Kills?" I believe it was originally referring to drugs. Well, it's also true of riding a motorcycle, car, boat, etc. The reason is the faster you go, the less reaction time you have built-in to deal with those bone-headed drivers doing stupid things and other surprises like crap in the road, approaching a decreasing radius curve, Bambi darting across the road, Rover nipping at your heels, over-driving your headlights, and no telling what else.



I think most Harley riders are of the laid-back, easy going, not in a big hurry, type of riders. I believe we have very safe and conscientious riders in our chapter. If during my tenure as Safety Officer, I have been able to get you to think about all this stuff and apply some of it to your riding; I will have done what I set out to do. The rules for riding a motorcycle and managing risk never change. They will always be there whether you are mentally or physically ready for them or not. How you handle all this stuff is for you to decide and you might want to think about it before you throw a leg over the seat and hit the start button.



At the end of the day, if all has gone well, and before you close the garage door, pat your bike on the seat and say, "Thanks for a nice, safe ride."

Be careful out there....it's a jungle. *Steve*