

# Safety Corner



Motorcycling is a fun sport that many of us enjoy, but there is the darker side and that involves motorcycle accidents and in the worse case scenario, fatal accidents. It is with a heavy heart that I am writing this article as one of our members, Glenn

Edrington, was recently killed in a motorcycle accident, and nothing brings it closer to home than when a friend and compatriot is in a fatal accident. While it appears that there was absolutely nothing that Glenn could have done to avoid the accident, short of not being at the intersection, that does not give me any solace, and he will be sorely missed.

This article will be an overview and refresher of the major causes of accidents and what you can do within your control to avoid an accident and its consequences.

As I have previously reported, the overriding majority, 75%, of motorcycle accidents are the result of a car/motorcycle collision. This category does not provide you with full control of all the variables that may ultimately result in an accident, but you do have some control over your destiny and among others, that is your powers of observation and ability to make decisions based upon what you see. Riding a motorcycle is not a passive sport; it is one that demands your full attention all the time if you are to remain relative safe and increase your margin of avoiding an accident.

While riding we must maintain an awareness of what is going on within a 360 degree radius around us. Further, recall if you will that 70% of all motorcycle accidents are the result of dangers that are developing right in front of us. These dangers might be very direct and obvious or much more subtle, but in either case, how you discern the danger will have a

direct bearing on whether or not you might successfully avoid an accident. Your reaction to the perception is key to any potential of avoiding the accident.

To provide a short example, a few months ago I was on a HOG sponsored ride and we had just left our lunch destination. A number of us were traveling north on US 27 in the far inside lane passing some of the slower traffic. I was the last bike and as I was about to pass a van that was in the middle traffic lane, when without warning the driver suddenly cut into my lane and gave me little choice except to look for somewhere to go. I was able to swerve out of the lane and even though I came up hard on an angled curb, I was none the worse for the experience. The point being made is that I mentally knew what was going on around me and when the driver began to move into my lane, I immediately knew where to flee to safety, and that is what each of you need to do as you ride. Run potential scenarios in your head as you drive along as to what you would do, if the driver in this or that vehicle doesn't see you and does this or that.

Drivers can give you subtle clues as to their intentions. You can and need to develop a certain sense as to what specific drivers are going to do, based on your observations. I'm confident every one of us has had the experience of watching a driver, predicting what they are going to do, and then watching as they do exactly what you just predicted. Practice this, and you will gain confidence in your ability guestimating what drivers might be up to. Am I implying that this will work all the time, NO, but add it to your arsenal of things you can do to avoid being in an accident.

Another example is in those situations where you are approaching an intersection and you are watching the driver to see if you can determine their intentions. Eye contact is OK, but one of the best ways to determine the driver's intentions is to watch the front wheels for the slightest roll of the tires. If you detect any roll-

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ing of the tire, you had better start making some decisions just in case the driver “doesn’t see you” and begins to enter the intersection. Plan to take evasive measures, start to break or at the very least, back off the throttle so the bike can start to slow down and perhaps give you an edge.

When you are at an intersection and the light changes to green for you, don’t be in a big hurry to get moving; instead look both ways and make as sure as you can that the traffic is stopping. Again watch the vehicle’s tires as they will give you an excellent idea whether or not a specific vehicle is slowing in preparation to stop. If you don’t perceive a slowing of the tires rotation, don’t go or at least move very cautiously so that if you have to stop, you can. This may sound rather basic, but I challenge you to examine your driving habits and see whether or not you look both ways before you proceed into an intersection after the light has turned green for you.

As you approach an intersection where you have the right of way, look ahead and watch the traffic as it approaches the same intersection and start evaluating whether or not you feel they are going to stop. Place your hands and feet on the brake surfaces and be ready if the vehicle doesn’t look like its slowing or stopping.

Another completely different approach to helping you to avoid accidents is to increase your visibility by how you choose to dress. If you wear bright florescent colors you are significantly more noticeable than if you wear dark or black colors that blend into the background. You might consider wearing a bright orange reflective vest such as the one marketed by Harley Davidson, or at least brightly colored shirts. Consider this when making this decision, why do you think almost universally Fire Departments switched to bright florescent green fire trucks? In a word visibility, the bright green stands out among other vehicles and is way more visible to the general motor-ing public.

Yet another means to enhance your visibility while riding your motorcycle is to upgrade the lighting on your bike. By adding LED or high intensity headlights, passing lamps and tail lamps you can significantly improve the visibility of your motorcycle. (See [March 2012 Safety Article](#) for further information on how upgrading your bike’s lighting can effect your visibility and safety) To give you a personal example, just the other night I was exiting a private drive onto a County Road when I looked both ways for oncoming traffic. I began to edge forward as I looked one final time and there to my left was a smaller metric bike traveling a fairly high rate of speed that I did not notice when I first looked. The bike was equipped with a single medium sized headlight and he just wasn’t very visible, as the headlight blended into existing lighting including street lights.

So, even with my experience riding motorcycles it is more than possible to not see an oncoming motorcycle. As a good friend of mine recently said, 80% of the drivers don’t see you and the other 20 % are trying to hit you. Obviously not a truism, but it does warrant thinking about to maintain an awareness of the potential dangers when riding a motorcycle.

In closing, always, always keep in mind that the right of way does not guarantee your safety and further, always think about how you can escape from where you are at if something goes terribly wrong.

**Glenn Edrington, 8/14/1961-9/25/2012**

**A good friend, he will be greatly missed.**

