

SAFETY CORNER

By Dave Esposito, AKA Cabbie

safetyofficer4755@gmail.com



Expect the Unexpected

Greetings, Everyone! I hope you all are enjoying the summer and the challenging riding weather that comes with it! We're all tempted to ride with minimum clothing this time of year and enjoy the wind therapy. Most of us know that this is not the thing to do. We want to protect ourselves as best we can in the event the motorcycle needs to be laid down. I pray this will not be the case for anyone. We've talked about seeing and being seen, and pre ride inspections. This month I want to talk about expecting the UNexpected! This is crucial for safety regardless if you've been riding for 50 days or 50 years! I've compiled a few tips that I hope will cause you to be cognizant of these situations.

A. Defensive Riding: Always assume that drivers may not see you. Try to stay in a position where you can be seen in the vehicle's mirror. If you cannot see the driver's face in their mirror, they cannot see you! Be prepared for sudden lane changes! Especially when slowing for a light in a multi lane highway. Someone will always change lanes suddenly in order to get into that unoccupied lane. We've all done that and we should expect other drivers to do it! Watch out for those vehicles that stop on the highway, they may be waiting to make a left turn into a driveway without giving signal. It's best to keep a safe distance and not try to go around it.

B. Anticipate Hazards: Keep your eyes moving! Scan the road ahead of you! Look for holes and other imperfections in the pavement. Look for sand and or gravel on the roadway, especially after a rain as this is washed out of the shoulder. Watch that greasy streak in the center of the lane as this too can be very slippery and even worse when wet. A stop line strip and crosswalk markings are equally slippery when wet. Be cautious when accelerating on these markings!

C. Intersection Awareness: Intersections are always a high risk area! Watch for those inattentive drivers who finally realize that they need to turn here and they're not in the proper lane! They're coming over and they don't see you on their right side. You need to brake quickly but you need to be sure the guy behind you isn't too close! So many instant decisions! That person walking across the street as you're stopped for the light, you may not see them because they're in front of the truck or bus that's beside you. Look both ways as you release that clutch lever! Of course there's always that one who will take a left without displaying a signal and cross your path. You must be ready to brake or swerve!

D. Animals on the Roadway: This is especially a hazard since the local area is still quite wooded in many locations. Thankfully, all animals have reflective eyes! This is helpful obviously to seeing them at night in the distance. This is not much help should one jump out of the woods as you're passing! Watch your speed after dark. I know the speed limit drops in the Florida Keys after dark. It might be a good idea to drop your speed after dark also. Most animal strikes occur at dawn and dusk but could happen at any time. Sometimes the safest thing to do is to actually strike the animal. Here are some considerations:

ANGLE MATTERS : if you cannot avoid the collision, try to strike the animal at an angle. Let up on the brake just before impact. This will raise the front slightly, potentially absorbing the force better.

CONTROLLED STOP : Even if you can't stop in time, avoid swerving into oncoming traffic! Brake firmly to minimize the crash.

SWERVING depends on the situation. Consider road conditions, traffic, and available space.

E. Emergency Maneuvers: Most of us drive and ride hoping and praying that we'll never run into an emergency situation. Most of us won't either, thankfully. But, we always need to be prepared for the worst, and Expect the UNexpected! I had a range officer years ago whose motto was "when under stress, in a crisis, you will instinctively revert to the manner in which you have been trained". That's a very true sentence right there. I would encourage every one of you to find an empty parking lot and practice, practice, and practice. Hard stops, braking on curves, swerving, and slow riding.

I hope we as a group can attend a motor officers training class soon. We had one scheduled several months back but canceled for rain.

Thank you all for reading! I welcome your comments.

Dave "Cabbie" Esposito
Safety Officer HOG 4755

Safety is of the Lord

Proverbs 21:31