

# AS THE MOTORCYCLE TURNS

Mark Welch — Safety Officer

Failure to properly negotiate a curve is the number one cause of single vehicle motorcycle crashes. That means that we do it to ourselves. As seasoned riders, we have the tendency to take our riding skills for granted because we have been riding incident free for so long. But it never hurts to think about what we are doing to refresh our perspective. Anyone can get on a motorcycle, put it in gear and ride it in a straight line. That is not why we ride on two wheels. We like the turns! How many of you reading this have ever ridden the Tail of the Dragon in Deals Gap? I am willing to wager that a large portion of our group has either ridden the Tail or wants to ride the Tail and experience those 318

curves in 11 miles. (Did you know Florida has its own Tail of the Dragon? It has 11 curves in 318 mile.)

If your motorcycle is going at a speed faster than a walking speed, then when you turn, you are actually counter-steering. That means to turn right, you turn the front wheel to the left. This causes the motorcycle to lean to the right, and voila! The motorcycle turns to the right. I had been riding for a number of years before this technique was explained to me. I doubted what I was being told and set out to see for myself if this was true. Out on a ride, I pressed on the right handgrip slightly to make the front tire turn to the left. And the motorcycle turned to the right. Try to contain your surprise.

Now that we have the mechanics of turning out of the way, let's talk about strategies to negotiate the curve. There are three types of curves, increasing

radius where the turn gets tighter as you ride through it, decreasing radius turns and constant radius curves. The thing to remember is that if you cannot see all the way through the curve, treat it as an increasing radius curve, which means slow your entry speed. You would not roll on the throttle if you were blindfolded and if you cannot see through the curve, it is almost like being blindfolded.

You can use a delayed entry apex, which means ride deep into the curve before you begin your turn. This is best accomplished by using the outside-inside-outside path of travel through the curve. That will also make the radius of your turn greater than the

radius of the curve and allow you to use all of your portion of the roadway.

Remember, to use SEE when you are riding, especially during curve negotiating. S- search. Scan your surroundings for traffic control devices and markings, roadway characteristics and surface conditions. E - evaluate. Process the information you gathered

visually. This is on-the-fly judgement at which we all need to excel. E - execute. This is where you act on the information you have gathered and processed, which fits into three categories: Adjust speed, adjust lane position, and communicate intentions. (Not the single-digit salute.)

After talking about all this curve negotiation, I think I am ready to head to the Tail of the Dragon! But that is a topic for David Kirk.

Head and eyes! Mark

