

Safety Corner



Riding your Motorcycle and Alcohol

As we are all aware National HOG rules prohibit any alcohol consumption until the ride is over. While drinking and riding is a publically agreed to no-no, there remains a prevalent behavior among riders, including more senior riders who are aware it is a serious safety issue but they then quietly condone or engage in the consumption of alcoholic beverages while still riding. Make no mistake about it; this is a very real problem and one that is growing in the riding community.

Alcohol related accidents and fatalities are up precipitously, and the trend does not appear to be abating anytime soon. More than 47% of fatal motorcycle accidents involve a rider who has alcohol in his system, or is under the influence of alcohol. Further, this appears to be a problem involving males more so than females.

How many among us have heard the worn out cliché, I've only had a two drinks, I'm ok. The truth be told, it only takes one drink to have an affect on you, and since alcohol's effects are not immediately noticed you probably do think you are just fine. The problem is, riding a motorcycle requires a significant level coordination, above that which is required to drive a car. On a motorcycle you have to balance it, steer, counter steer, manipulate the clutch, shift and apply pressure to your front and rear brakes, and pay attention to traffic around you among other things and the first affect of alcohol is to compromise your coordination.



Recent NHTSA statistics showed that approximately 82% of the alcohol related fatalities were males. They also showed a 10% increase in motorcycle fatalities while at the same time fatalities involving drivers of cars have decreased by 6%. It seems that some got the message that drinking and driving is hazardous if you in a car, but the message is still lost on motorcycle riders. Statistically, the majority of alcohol related fatal motorcycle crashes occur between 6 pm and 9 pm with a sight majority occurring over the weekend.

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) has expressed serious concerns regarding these statistics and will continue the organization's efforts to make riders aware of the "pure folly" of

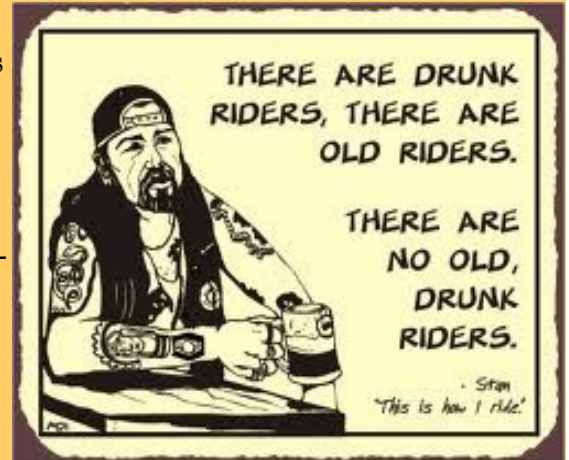
(Continued on page 4)

Safety Corner—Jerry Coney

(Continued from page 4)

riding with alcohol in their bloodstream. According to the MSF Director of Special Projects, there is no amount of alcohol that is safe, and estimates that the minimal amount of alcohol increases the chance of a crash five fold and a legal Blood Alcohol level of .05 increases the probability of a crash 40 fold.

While there are a far greater number of alcohol studies involving auto drivers, studies involving motorcycle riders have shown that a blood alcohol level as low as 0.01 to 0.04 compromised the rider's skills, and it does not take much alcohol to reach this level. From 0.05 to 0.07 percent, thinking and reasoning powers diminish even further, and ability to perform complex skills continues to decline. By the time the legal limit of 0.08 percent is reached, reasoning powers are severely hampered, and common simple tasks are completed with errors. At this level, in a not uncommon emergency braking and swerve scenario, the average rider will be very fortunate if he does not crash and become a statistic.



Generally speaking, one standard, (one ounce) drink raises the BAC by 15mg% in an adult male of average weight and build. On average, it takes one hour for the body to completely metabolize the alcohol to a point where the alcohol has been completely burned up by the body. As a general rule, it will take a number of hours equal to the number of drinks you have consumed to eliminate the alcohol from your system.

Lastly, a standard drink is defined as a measure containing 8g of alcohol. This is approximately the amount of alcohol contained in the standard measures of alcoholic drinks. However, the advent of both higher and lower strength beers and wines, etc. has complicated the picture and the below should only be regarded as a rough guide to equivalence:



Based upon a growing problem, perhaps we as individuals need to look at the issues and decide if it's worth the risk involved to have even a single drink and then ride.

Ride safe, enjoy the wonderful weather and above all, ride alcohol free!