

The MSF's 100 Motorcyclist Naturalistic Study

THE HURT REPORT COMPILED BY PROFESSOR Harry Hurt and his team was published in 1981 after being initiated in 1971. Since then, the motorcycling world has not had an updated

or complete study relating to motorcycle crashes and/or the cause of them. The Hurt Report has been a steadfast study to which many people still refer. Even though some of the information compiled back then may stand true today, motorcycles, people, and society have obviously changed. Since then, there have been several smaller, isolated studies and statistics assembled from information that is somewhat readily available (police reports, state DMV stats, MSF school enrollments, etc.), but nothing related to riding or the motorcyclist in general has been done to either update that initial report or present new findings — until recently.

Almost 18 months ago, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) in conjunction with the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, started a year-long study of 100 motorcyclists designed to track and record info of real time riding that had the potential to include close calls, events prior to a crash, and an actual crash. A study like this has never been done before. The Hurt study concentrated on post-crash situations and conditions, the MSF study would be collecting data throughout a rider's normal riding routine as well as record all the information relating to a crash.

The study included riders ranging in age from 21 to 64 plus an array of motorcycles that represented the present industry. Small "beginner" bikes, mid-to-high-power sport-bikes, touring models, and cruisers made up the motorcycle types. Riders were volunteers from various locations around the country and their bikes were outfitted with data-recording devices that included GPS trackers, accelerometers, lane trackers, forward radars, gyroscopic devices, pedal and lever sensors, and five color cameras; one viewed forward, one rear, one viewed at each hand and the fifth at the riders face/helmet. Everything would be recorded in sequence every time the motorcycle was turned on.

All these devices compile constant data from every ride, including how motorcyclists react to situations, whether it

be simple lane changes, or emergency reactions. This unique approach will give the MSF's team data that not only shows how motorcyclists ride, but how they react or what they may or may not have been doing prior to a condition that required a response. This study will also show what riders do on a daily basis in their natural riding environment. It will reflect more of a rider's behavior, something that was never included in past studies.

Now that the MSF has collected all the data it is starting its review. At this point, I wouldn't count on any big revelations or figures. I recently attended a DMV symposium where the MSF's director of quality assurance and research and point leader of the study, Dr. Sherry Williams, made a presentation. At this time, she has over 40 million points of information to review. Forty million! That's a lot of information to look at, and the results, data, information, etc. from this study could take years to review. But that doesn't mean she won't be sharing what she finds from time to time. She already has some information gathered for presentation.

So what does this mean for us? Well up until this study, we more or less could evaluate how and why a motorcycle may have crashed, whether as a solo vehicle crash or with another vehicle. We also could rationalize information pertaining to the possible

conditions that lead up to a crash, and more than likely, all this previously known information will be once again confirmed through the new findings. What we will get a better understanding of is the natural behavior of motorcyclists and how they approach riding and the situations they experience.

So, were there any crashes with the study subject? Yes, but not as many as one might think. There are probably a lot of close calls recorded, and I would imagine that after riding around for a year with all that equipment, many of the riders probably forgot each and every situation, even the close calls, but we will still have the data.

Can learning about ourselves as riders and how we approach or react to a situation make us more proficient riders? There is a good chance it will, and with the amount of data the MSF, we will probably be learning more key points for years to come. Will this be a magic wand to reduce and prevent crashes? Like everything else when it comes to rider education and skills, it all depends on how you use it. **AIM**



This study will also show what motorcyclists do on a daily basis in their natural riding environment