

S.T.O.P. Crashes

We can always improve our safety knowledge

For many of us, the new riding season is just around the corner. Besides the anticipation of rolling along the byways once again, there are a lot of items we need to consider before swinging our legs over that bike and cruising away.

When the weather turns nice and especially on weekends, we unfortunately see a high spike in motorcycle crashes and fatalities. This can be due to several factors we in the riding community should be mindful of. For one, riding gear should be inspected to see that it is in proper condition. Also, the bike needs a good look over to ensure all components are working as they should be. Finally, we need to check ourselves; for many, it may have been months since we last rode and our motor skills are not at the same level when we parked our ride for the winter (for some, they may not have been adequate in the first place).

Over the years I have reminded riders that drivers do not pay much attention to us, and lately my thoughts on this have expanded. It seems it does not matter what time of year it is; drivers do not recognize us, period. There are a number of reasons for this, a major one being the prevalence of distracted driving. So, the burden of creating a safe road environment between riders and drivers falls on us; do not rely on them to maintain your safety.

For 2020, we all should review what we need to do to S.T.O.P.

crashes:

Strategize: To start with, we need a strategy to become more proficient riders and make sure our approach to each and every ride is conducted in a safe manner. We are responsible for our own safety and should ride accordingly.

Train: Unvarnished experience is no replacement for proper safety knowledge. The dismissive attitude that one cannot or should not refine existing safety skills or learn new ones, often expressed with the phrase "I already know how to ride," is one of the biggest enemies plaguing the community. There is really no limitation to what one can learn and do to become safer. Riding programs will almost certainly improve our motor skills and help us identify any bad habits we may have developed over the years.

Observe: We must possess keen situational awareness and work to develop it with each ride. Strengthening this observational ability helps us better analyze traffic and road conditions, traffic controls (e.g., signs, lights), weather, traction, the state of our motorcycles, and escape paths, should they be necessary. There is a ton of information to keep in mind to vastly improve our safety.

Not doing so can cause outcomes that certainly are not favorable for us.

Practice: We should incorporate every aspect of the points above and practice them faithfully. Failure to practice these skills, especially avoidance skills such as swerving or quick braking along with the mental processing approach, will result in complacency and the return of dangerous habits.

Don't forget: Motorcycling is fun! Taking the steps to become more skillful and thoughtful will only boost the thrill we get from riding. It's hard to think that riding can be more fun, but doing it with an educated, measured approach can definitely do that.

While I get that there's always a possibility the "other guys" initiate a hazardous situation through no fault of our own, I also understand that all too often the problems are caused by things we may or may not have done at the time. Proper safety education is never a bad thing for us, and maintaining a self-program to become safer is never a bad thing to do.

The 2020 season ahead can fill your riding memories with fantastic experiences; why not take the steps to keep yourself safe and S.T.O.P. crashes from happening? **AIM**

