

Three Ss to Survival

LATELY, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS INDICATING a rise in motorcycle crashes at the national level. Several factors might be responsible for this, among them being the upswing of the economy

that has enabled more people with disposable income to return to motorcycling. Another factor is the rising average age of motorcyclists who might have limited experience in road riding. Perhaps, too, we as a community have become a bit complacent in our driving and riding habits. Regardless of the causes, there are things we can do to help stop this upsurge of accidents.

I'm associated with a nonprofit organization in New York that promotes motorcycle awareness and the benefits of rider education, and this group, like many others across the nation, offers tips on how to minimize motorcycle accidents. The Empire State Motorcycle Safety Education Program (ESMSEP) offers many free seminars to licensed motorcyclists to present them with motorcycle safety information. As much as we always need to watch out for the "other guy," there are many statistics, which indicate that we, as a motorcycling community, are to blame for more crashes than we'd like to believe. Yes, we need to always be vigilant for other vehicles on the road, but we definitely need to check our own riding skills first, and the accident numbers support that. We are the ones who need to take the first step to reduce the rising accident statistics.

Many motorcycle riders tend to give up too much control to other motorists during situations where we should really be taking control of our own actions. One of the primary roots for ESMSEP presentations is the 3 Ss to Survival, which includes Strategy, Skills, and Safety Gear. Here's a quick break down of each.

Strategy: it's important to have a strategy for riding that includes information about your immediate surroundings. Consider factors such as traffic, road and weather/environmental conditions, and the capabilities of you and your bike so that you can constantly adjust to traffic situations as you ride down the road. Conditioning your brain to recognize and program that information can help prevent a dangerous scenario from actually taking place. Identifying key elements is important,

and remember that every situation doesn't require an emergency reaction. Minor precautions such as lane positioning, slight deceleration, lane switching, covering controls, or proper setup for a road condition can influence the outcome of arising traffic issues. In short, reading the road and every bit of information it offers could minimize your risk of an accident.

Skills: although considering the mental processes associated with your riding strategy is a top priority, having the proper skills to make those adjustments is just as important. You need to honestly self-assess your skill level as a rider, keeping in mind that experience doesn't determine your skill level. A person with 20 years of riding experience might have a skill level equal to someone with only one year of experience. I realize this is a tough one to swallow, but proper education can help you become a proficient rider.

Safety Gear: some riders feel that if you're using your safety gear to protect yourself in a crash, there's a strong chance you failed to properly apply the first two Ss. Maybe, maybe not. However, motorcycle riding gear is intended to fit and protect you to the best of its abilities. Nothing more. Today's technology enables us to have riding gear for any type of condition or weather you might encounter on the road. I rarely discuss helmets, knowing that

many riders live in states that don't have mandatory helmet laws. I understand the freedom of choice, but you should make your decision of not wearing a helmet based on accurate information. There are many falsehoods associated with helmet protection, but one thing is for sure: helmets work effectively for the conditions they're designed for. Take the time to find reputable sources to review the correct info before making your decision not to wear one. Head injury is the number-one reason behind motorcycle fatalities, and, yes, a percentage of that even includes helmeted riders.

Taking the steps to study and adhere to the information of the 3 Ss can help you prevent a possible crash or accident when you ride. Yes, we should always keep in mind that the other guy could be at fault, but when it comes to sharing the road, we have a responsibility, first and foremost, to watch out for ourselves. The best advice any rider can use to remain safe on the road is to take back the control of situations and conditions that prevail. Don't let other drivers dictate any possible results. **AIM**



We are the ones who need to take the first step to reduce the rising accident statistics