

# The Other Guy

EVER SINCE I GOT INTO MOTORCYCLING 40-PLUS years ago, the one thing I've heard from other riders that has always resonated with me is that you always have to watch out for "the other guy."

They're the reason for most of the accidents. This was a factor for much of my riding awareness for decades. It wasn't until I got into rider safety and education plus reviewing the statistics that I noticed things to be different.

The numbers may have changed a bit over the years and the amount of crashes and/or fatalities may have risen or decreased at points over time, but there has been a couple of factors that haven't changed much in years. Nearly half of all motorcycle crashes are single vehicle, which indicates that the rider was at fault for various reasons. The remaining 50 percent of crashes typically involves one or more vehicles (that infamous other guy), but crash investigations reveal nearly half of those incidents put the motorcyclist at partial fault for the final outcome. Reasons include incorrect actions, inexperience, and more. So now if we step back and look at these numbers, we'll see that nearly 75 percent of the motorcycle crashes are either fully or partially the fault of the biker. Those are alarming numbers. Perhaps we need to look at our actions or inactions more than those of the other guy. As scary as those numbers are, we'll put them aside and concentrate on things we can do to prevent the mishaps that may be caused by our road-sharing nemesis of lore because no matter what, we still have to watch out for other users of the road.

As many of you may know, the number one location for potential conflict with a car is intersections. Typically this is where the oncoming vehicle makes a left turn into our path of travel. How can we prevent this? Well, there are a few key points to consider. First we have to keep in mind that even though we may be riding a big bike, it's still a lot smaller visually than the smallest car. Drivers aren't adept or trained to recognize us, and our minimal profile makes it easier for them to see right past us or not see us at all. Plus if they do see us, because of our size and profile, it might be hard for them to distinguish our speed. Just about every car/motor-

cycle collision winds up with the driver saying "I didn't see him." We need to exercise extreme caution at intersections. Keep in mind that drivers more than likely are looking where they want to turn, and since they "can't see you" very well might turn directly in front of you — never a good scenario.

A lot of us have heard that we should ride like we're invisible; that's a good thought process but we should always increase our awareness of probable situations and consider an action plan. This could include lane position adjustments, covering our controls for faster response, slowing down, etc. There's not one simple answer for each circumstance, so we need to take into account any possibilities and be prepared with the skills to address whatever action we might need to take.

Another dangerous setting would be turns, twisties, and radiuses. We need to always think about our setup for cornering, especially when we make right-hand turns. There have been past studies that show drivers have a tendency to cross the dividing line when they make left turns. A lot of this has to do with the physical properties of being a left-side driving vehicle, vision, and any possible obstructions that may arise from the car. If the turn you're planning to sweep through has limited vision to see fully from beginning to end, you may want to consider your setup and approach. It's always better to err by going too slow into a turn; you can always "speed" out

of it, but if your line is too wide and speed too fast, it could cause a calamity — again, not a good scenario.

There are plenty of other situations where the other guy can cause disastrous outcomes, but we need to start with the reminder that we are responsible for our safety. As much as there might be times that no matter what we do a crash with another vehicle may not be avoidable, we should always do whatever we can to avoid becoming a statistic. This could start with continuing your rider education and constantly practicing your skills plus increasing your awareness for impending situations. We need to be the first line of defense. Also, consider supporting motorcycle rights organizations that do what they can to promote motorcycle awareness. Bottom line to consider: get trained, stay sharp, and watch out for the other guy. They're always going to be there. **AIM**



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