

Defensive Rules of Thumb
For riding alone or with one or two other bikes
Who are in good communication

Experience riders know that things happen on a bike that almost never happen when driving a car. And when they do they are a much greater hazard to staying upright and in control because of the inherent instability and maneuverability of riding on only two wheels. Keeping these in mind will give you a bigger buffer of reaction time and minimize your chances of being involved in an accident wherein bikers are almost always the big loser!

GENERAL –

- **About the only condition that a bike may OUTPERFORM an automobile IS STOPPING distance on a straight ahead path on dry pavement. Everything else is dependent on traction and pre-positioning one's balance or the bikes attitude.**
- **Added weight of 20 lbs or more in the tour pack (HD, GW or RN) or a passenger will significantly change your maneuverability and stopping distance. When taking a new passenger on board consider PRACTICING a PANIC STOP (using gears and both brakes) and CENTER LINE WEAVING from a near dead stop.**
- **ANTICIPATE MERGING TRAFFIC (especially those coming out of parking lots) and accident they may cause that could end up in your lane. Example: making turn on green arrow onto a multi-lane street like 441 when there is a car departing a parking lot just around the corner.**
- **High beam (+ driving lights) always in day light hours. Recommended in state motorcycle operators manual. BE AS MUCH OF AN IRRITANT as possible to make sure that people see you.**
- **On Interstate ride in left lane when a WIDE PAVED SHOULDERS is available. If there is none and the right shoulder is better for an unanticipated departure, keep to right unless there is too many on ramps and lots of traffic. Last resort is a center lane on a six lane route.**
- **SUPPLEMENT your LANE CHANGES/turn signals WITH HAND SIGNALS – white gloves / jacket.**
- **If you have a choice – DON'T RIDE IN RAIN OR AT NIGHT. If you must, reduce speed 10 mph from what you would do in daylight/dry conditions.**
- **NEVER FOLLOW any vehicle CENTERED between their tire lanes. If they straddle debris to miss it, guess who hits it?**
- **When following other vehicles or meeting them AND when approaching rough roadway – be cognizant of anything that might come off their vehicle including gravel and trailers!**
- **Experienced drivers – ride with TWO FINGERS ON CLUTCH and FRONT BRAKE LEVERS except in ZERO hazard areas. 1/4th to 1/3rd second reaction time is 11 to 15 ft at 30 mph and of course, twice that at 60 mph. Inexperienced drivers who make a panic application on front brake may apply too much pressure and go down.**
- **DON'T OVERDRIVE YOUR VIEW of the roadway particularly on small hills and turns in terms of your stopping distance stopping distance.**
- **Anticipate your position in traffic so that you will not be forced to linger in a driver's LEFT blind spot. Especially true with bikes with stock mufflers. An application of the**

horn, no matter how loud, usually does not stop automobile drivers from completing their lane change!

- Just remember **DARK SPOTS ON THE ROAD** may be shadows, road repairs, oil or antifreeze spills or **HOLE**S. Most vulnerable in dim light or darkness.
- Road traveled 10 minutes earlier can have **NEW HAZARDS**.
- Assume that when it is **NEAR SUNDOWN** and the sun is on your back that you are **INVISIBLE** to oncoming traffic.
- Wear **SUBSTANTIAL** shoes or boots.
- Shift into **NEUTRAL** at a stop. No mistake starting out in **SECOND** gear. **AND** if bike goes down it won't tear up you and the bike.
- **NEVER SITE SEE** – let passenger to that unless you're on a straight “open” road with no traffic. Direction your eyes are focused is subconsciously the way you will drive. When a serious hazard appears, look at escape point not the hazard.

DRIVE IN THE LEFT TIRE TRACK of the lane when –

- **TRAFFIC IS CLOSE BEHIND** and you feel the potential that they will want to pass in marginal conditions with oncoming traffic
- **NIGHT OR** when near bridges or things that obstruct the view at the edge of the right away. This will maximize your buffer if a critter comes up out of the ditch. If conditions allow, reduce speed about 20 mph when approaching these bridges.

DRIVE IN THE RIGHT TIRE TRACK of the lane when –

- **WHEN** following a vehicle within a hundred yards and **A TRUCK IS APPROACHING**. A car may be following the truck closely and when the vehicle ahead of you has passed them the car will shift left to check for clearance to pass. That's when you want to also be sure that you have all the obnoxious lighting turned on.
- When there is loose light weight **DEBRIS IN THE LEFT VEHICLE LANE** that can be disturbed by on-coming traffic or the wind.

IN CONCLUSION, WITH RECOGNITION OF THE ABOVE HAZARDS ONE WILL KNOW WHAT IT IS TO TRULY FEAR AND LOVE SOMETHING!

Walt Paulsen, Village Nomads 2007