

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Some time ago, during a training session, we had a discussion on Risk Management as it pertains to motorcycle riding. I asked the following questions.

1. What concerns you most about riding?

The responses included

- The people around me
- Getting hit
- Road hazards
- Dropping my bike in a parking lot
- Crashing
- Breaking down
- Weather conditions, such as cold, rain and heat

2. If you are so concerned about these things, why do you ride?

A summary of the answers was: We understand the dangers, but we enjoy riding and it is worth the risk.

3. Okay then, what can you do to address these concerns (reduce the risk)?

Some of the suggestions were

- Develop riding skills
- Ride defensively
- Take MSF course
- Practice
- Stay alert
- Maintain Space/Time cushion
- Know your limits
- Ride conservatively (especially on unfamiliar roads)
- Maintain your bike (Use T-CLOCS)
- Wear protective clothing and dress for the ride
- Make yourself as visible as possible
- Plan your ride

These are all good answers and get to the heart of what I was intending to convey. What we had just done was to describe the process of Risk Management. Most things that we do involve some degree of risk. We need to identify the risk and reduce it to an acceptable level in order to enjoy the activity. Motorcycling is a very risky proposition and Risk Management is an integral part of riding.

Without any knowledge or experience, we are uncertain of the consequences of getting out on the road. By understanding the dangers involved, we change uncertainty to risk. Answering question 1 did just that. You cannot manage uncertainty; you can manage risk. The answers to question 3 suggested some of the things we can do to minimize or manage the risk.

So, we need to change uncertainty to risk, and then reduce it to an acceptable level.

1. Identify the potential dangers and understand the risk.
2. Determine what you can do to minimize the likelihood of an occurrence.
3. Put these preventative measures into practice to lower the risk:
  - Proper attitude
  - Protective gear
  - Mental and physical strategies developed through training.

Riding a motorcycle is mostly mental, perhaps 90 percent. Mental preparation for the ride is critical. This begins with being alert and free from stress and other emotional distractions. Equally important is the rider's attention. Lack of attention to the riding task is a predominate cause of many crashes. Protective gear helps. Dressing for the ride can minimize physical distractions so that you can pay attention to the task at hand. It's hard to concentrate when you are freezing cold or hot, or with rain pelting against your face and hands.

Even with the proper mindset, you still must have the ability to react to what you see. Strategies can help you anticipate and avoid problems before they occur. Riding strategies define the way your mind deals with the hazards in the riding environment and are the most effective way of recognizing and lowering risk. Though some natural coordination is required, most of a rider's skill comes through knowledge and experience. Knowledge can be gained through formal classroom training and physical skills from on the bike practice. Your attitude provides the basis for using this knowledge effectively. You understand the risk, know your limits, and ride within those limits, using your mental strategies.