

Traffic Safety and Recreational Off-Duty Safety Update

MARCH MARKS THE START.... OF MOTORCYCLE SEASON

Blue skies and warm weather welcomed motorcycle season at Dahlgren Navy Base Monday, March 9. Vanessa Jones and Bill Johnston set up shop in the Mess Hall to promote the on-base motorcycle safety courses that Cape Fox Professional Services (CFPS) offers.

Dan Moore, CFPS Naval District Washington Regional Lead, stands by the program, "By taking the Motorcycle Safety Courses you learn or hone your skills to help survive on the road in today's traffic. Besides, you cannot be charged leave-time when taking courses and you get to ride your motorcycle. It sounds like a win-win situation to me."

Naval District Washington is starting a new type of Basic RiderCourse (BRC) this spring. The BRCI is a true beginner's level course. The course will have only 7 students, and motorcycles will be provided. This is a course that is aimed towards individuals who have never ridden a motorcycle before. It is an introductory course that will cater to the questions and the minimal experience of first time riders. The BRCI is designed to introduce the sport of motorcycling to beginner riders in a more comfortable setting than they may feel in a typical BRC.

CFPS's motorcycle skills training courses at most Navy and Marine Corps installations started this month.



A Dahlgren Sailor signs up for BRC course

MOTORCYCLE RIDING IN THE NAVY TODAY

An Interview with United States Navy Captain Rick May

Andrew Kenefick
Regional Lead--Naval Region Southwest

Captain May's Story...

My first exposure to motorcycling came on the back of my Dad's step-through frame Honda 90. My first bike, a Tecumseh lawnmower engine mini bike, hooked me, and it only progressed from there. I started trail riding with my Dad in the mountains of Colorado, and I quickly moved to Motocross and Time Trial (TT) Racing. My Dad was firmly against Flat Track, as the speeds were higher than he was comfortable with me riding.

I have owned so many motorcycles over the years that I have lost count. I started riding the road with the Harley crowd when Steppenwolf's "Born to Be Wild" was hot on the music charts. I moved through lots of different types of bikes, and finally realized what I part of riding I enjoyed the most. Riding on closed asphalt tracks, dragging a knee at high speed on a purpose built race machine--that is it for me. Ducati is my weapon of choice, both for the race track, and the street.

AK: WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS TOWARDS SAILORS USING MOTORCYCLES FOR TRANSPORTATION OR RECREATION?

I'm not concerned about sailors riding motorcycles for transportation or recreation providing he or she has the proper skills to ride it. Training is a step in the right direction, but training does not equate to experience. New riders should be encouraged to purchase and ride motorcycles designed for new riders, models 500cc or less. As the sailor's skill develops and he or she gains experience only then should a large displacement or high performance model be considered.

AK: WHAT TYPE OF INITIATIVES ARE SENIOR LEADERSHIP CONSIDERING TOWARDS KEEPING SAILORS SAFE ON MOTORCYCLES?

Within the Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) the current proposal is to implement something similar to the tiered licensing system used in Japan. A new rider is limited to a motorcycle of 500cc or less. New riders will ride with designated mentors within their Command while gaining experience on smaller displacement machines, moving to larger bikes as their ability and driving record permit.

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MOTORCYCLE RIDING IN THE NAVY TODAY

AK: WHAT CAN WE AS A SERVICE PROVIDE DO TO ASSIST IN IMPLEMENTING THESE INITIATIVES?

Keep in constant communication with various Commands in order to meet unique schedules. Possibly make classes more accessible by holding additional weekend classes. Consider alternative curricula available in today's market which concentrates on interaction with traffic and daily street riding, for example MSF's Group Ride presentation, or the new street ride program from MSF. Incorporating simulators into the program would also be an effective tool.



Captain May track riding on his sportbike.

AK: IN WHAT WAYS IS NAVY LEADERSHIP ENFORCING THE OPNAV REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TRAINING PROGRAM?

This is accomplished through Command involvement and tracking of the training as well as utilizing the Motorcycle Mentorship Program to augment formal training. Each rider is educated on the training requirements, and understands that this is an individual training requirement. If a rider fails to complete his or her follow-on training and a mishap occurs then this should be looked at as a line of duty issue.

AK: WHAT CAN LEADERSHIP DO TO SET THE EXAMPLE?

Leadership can recognize that motorcycling is a legitimate activity just as sky diving, scuba diving, mountain climbing or other adrenaline charged sports are. They can take interest in the activity by sponsoring responsible riding programs, holding frequent safety standowns and being actively involved in mentorship programs. If you make such things an option, rather than a requirement, change will not happen. We need active involvement by the riders and their Chain of Command to effect change. We also need to recognize that there are a few individuals out there, that in the words of the warden in Cool Hand Luke, "just can't be reached". For those individuals we need to take a hard line approach, saving them from themselves.

I make it a point to ride within the bounds of the law when I ride. I try not to speed, but I do keep up with traffic. I have never dragged a knee through a turn on the street and cannot ever remember having the front end off the ground. The track is a different story though. That is where I can go as fast as I am capable and I don't have to worry about dogs, cats and soccer moms in vans cutting me off while talking on the cell phone. I ride a Suzuki Hayabusa on the street, arguably the fastest production motorcycle on the planet. I don't have to prove that when I go out to ride. I have a life off the bike too, and want to nurture both. Riding recklessly or above your skill level will shorten both, make no mistake about it. Motorcycling doth not suffer fools!

CAPTAIN RICK MAY JOINED THE NAVY IN 1973, AND BECAME A SEAL IN 1976. HE HAS SPENT HIS ENTIRE CAREER SERVING IN NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE. HE AND HIS WIFE OF 23 YEARS, THE FORMER, HEATHER JEAN HUNTER LIVE IN POINT LOMA, CALIFORNIA. THEY HAVE ONE SON, HUNTER, 21.

SIGNALLING AWARENESS

John Gifford

Regional Lead--Navy Region Mid-Atlantic

While reading one of my favorite motorcycle magazines, I recently came across the 'safety' article. Most motorcycle magazines have a safety article or at least recommended riding tips in every issue. The article, lengthy for most, was about communication between motorcyclists and other traffic, specifically how acts of communication are sent, received and interpreted.

Is there really a difference in the way we and other drivers interpret communications signals between us? Our brain still requires time to interpret what our eyes see and then we react. The time needed to react takes about two seconds. Two seconds is not considered a lot of time; however it is valuable time of which is often not taken advantage.

Often a driver will look in our direction, seemingly right at us then move straight in our path. Yet, a crash occurs, leaving us with a busted bike and the possibility of injury. Approximately 75% of motorcycle crashes involve a collision with another vehicle, often a passenger automobile.

Why does this scenario seem to happen so frequently, and what can we do to prevent this from happening to us?

There are some things we can do to help prevent from mishaps on our bikes.

1. Step 1 is to be aware. Riding a bike is not like driving a car. Unlike an automobile, minor mistakes while riding a motorcycle are merciless. Pay attention to other vehicles. Learn to read the drivers of those vehicles around you. We have all seen them, the people that are traveling way too fast for any traffic or weather conditions, on the cell phone or brushing their teeth.
2. Step 2 is to educate yourself. Visit the MSF web site. You can find articles on safe riding, state laws, MSF courses listings, and articles about and links to your type of motorcycle. There are many other sites and resources on the web.
3. Step 3 is to train. Sign up and take a course. Sign up even if you have been riding for one year or twenty years. How many drivers or riders do you know that will be quick to tell you they have been driving or riding for years yet they are horrific at both?

So the next time you find yourself riding up to an intersection and a driver seems to see you, I hope you are ready if they do not.

Upcoming Events

Pentagon Safety Days
May 1 & 2
Washington, DC

Rain Rain Go Away...I REALLY want to ride today.

MOTORCYCLING IN THE RAIN

By Art Friedman

Riding in the rain safely is a matter of dressing properly, understanding traction, making sure you can see, and making that you are seen. From the April 1998 issue of Motorcycle Cruiser magazine.

The key element in being able to enjoy a day riding in the rain is good RAIN GEAR. There is nothing like a hard, biting rainstorm to convince someone of the advantage of a full-coverage helmet. Rain drops can hurt at 65 mph, so you want your face covered. You may also may not want the dark lenses of your sun glasses. A full-coverage faceshield on an open-face helmet will block the rain drops, but lets more water get onto your face and drip down the inside of the shield of a full-face helmet.

Staying comfortable is important. If you get wet and cold, fatigue erodes that mental edge you need to stay ahead of the traffic around you.

That brings us back to VISION. The ability of other drivers to see us could be the single biggest issue a motorcyclist must confront in the rain. With low light, windows obscured, and a streaked and possibly fogged windshield, the driver of a car may have a very difficult time seeing the world ahead. If you are wearing black, or even worse, a neutral color like gray or olive drab, you blend into that gray world. A bright yellow rainsuit is probably the best choice for conspicuity and the single simplest way to make your wet-weather rides safer, though white is also an excellent choice and even better than yellow at night. Fluorescent colors also help during the day and retro-reflective striping or panels on your rainsuit, helmet or a pack also help at night. A visible helmet color also makes a difference at night.

TRACTION seems to be the primary concern for most riders, usually because they aren't sure how much grip they have available. While some surfaces--metal fixtures such as manhole covers and bridge gratings, painted areas, and places where built-up oil and grease have not washed off--become much slipperier when wet, you can actually call on a surprising amount of traction on clean asphalt or concrete.

Places where the oil doesn't get washed away by rain falling on it can be thrilling. Watch out for surfaces where water gets carried in but doesn't fall on the road with the force or in the quantity to remove the oil. Toll booths and parking garages offer a chance to experience this sort of low-traction excitement. There is a highway tunnel not far from my house that's 200 or 300 yards long. The oil in there makes it feel a bit slippery when it's dry. When it rains, the surface is like buttered Teflon. Because the tunnel curves, it's a potentially deadly spot for motorcyclists, especially one who rides in expecting a momentary relief from the wet road.

TURNING a motorcycle on such a slick surface demands an ultra-smooth approach. Getting on the brakes abruptly or making a sudden steering input could put you in the guardrail. So you want to be slowed down before you go in there and keep the throttle neutral all the way through --and be ready for cars that might get unstuck and block the whole mess.

That smooth approach to speed and direction changes will serve you well on all wet roads. Initiate your turns a bit more gradually. Downshift smoothly, engaging the clutch a bit slower than usual, and avoid abrupt throttle changes. Get on the throttle progressively. Use a taller gear to reduce the forces reaching the rear tire. Apply the brakes in such a way that the tires are not loaded abruptly. Allow more space to stop or slow down so that you need less. And also make sure that drivers around you have time to react to your moves.

Women Riders Now

May is Women Riders Month

Get out riding, get involved, and get noticed

This May the rumble from those April showers will continue a little longer as thousands of female riders hit the open road to celebrate the first-ever Women Riders Month. Harley-Davidson is staging a series of events designed to celebrate the number of women who have already hit the open road on two wheels, as well as encourage even more women to get behind the handlebars. Two of the larger Harley-Davidson Women Riders Month initiatives include activities for the Third Annual International Female Ride Day on Friday, May 1, 2009, and encouraging 100,000 women to learn to ride.

International Female Ride Day was started by Vicki Gray of Motoress.com and falls on the first day of May. The special day seeks to promote awareness and celebrate women riders of all ages across the globe. This year Harley-Davidson jumped on the bandwagon by declaring the whole month of May Women Riders Month with plans to stage special rides in New York City and Milwaukee to commemorate International Female Ride Day on May 1. There are other activities planned for around the country, so check with your local dealership, women's club, or plan your own ride during the month and make some noise that May is Women Rider's Month. Feel free to use WRN's Connect With Others page to reach out to women in your area. And then send in a story and a photo about your ride or event to our Readers' Stories. We may just post it on the site. Many of WRN's readers have participated in rider safety programs, like Harley-Davidson Rider's Edge New Rider Course or the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) Basic Rider Course. Now it's time to get your friends involved. Both Rider's Edge and MSF are offering courses for the first weekend in May aiming to set a Guinness World Record for the number of women motorcycle riders trained in one weekend. The goal is get 100,000 women signed up and trained across the nation.

"Women have been enjoying the sport of motorcycling for the last century," said Leslie Previs, women's outreach manager for Harley-Davidson. "In the past two decades, we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of women who've embraced the sport. By declaring May as Women Riders Month, we're honoring all of the women who enjoy the freedom and adventure found in taking control of their own handlebars."

In the past 20 years, the percentage of women who have purchased new Harley-Davidson motorcycles has tripled, with women now accounting for nearly 12 percent of new Harley-Davidson motorcycle purchases. "We know there are thousands of women who are interested in the sport, but aren't sure where to start," said Previs. "We are encouraging women to learn how to ride a motorcycle to increase the women rider community and help them along their journey."



For more information on how to get into motorcycling including classes, beginners bikes, and much more visit WRN's Getting Started Page in the Beginner's Guide Section, or go to RidersEdge.com or MSF-USA.org.

Look out for women-only Garage Parties at Harley-Davidson dealerships throughout the month of May. WRN Founder Genevieve Schmitt will be speaking at a Garage Party at Freedom Harley-Davidson in Lakewood, Colorado, a suburb of Denver, on May 9 to deliver her "Making More Saddle Time" speech.

Visit your local Harley-Davidson dealership or log onto Harley-Davidson.com/WomenRiders to find out about Garage Parties or the opportunity to participate International Female Ride Day rides.

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Motorcycle Safety Quiz

1. **Drivers authorized to operate a motorcycle on an installation are required to complete:**
 - a. Only state required training
 - b. Orientation training by the motorcycle seller
 - c. Industry provided motorcycle training course
 - d. Navy or Marine Corps-approved motorcycle training course
2. **Traction is?**
 - a. Tire loading expressed in pounds
 - b. Friction between the tires and the road surface
 - c. A combination of weight and centrifugal force
 - d. A direct function of the weight of the rider relative to the weight of the motorcycle
3. **Slowly rolling on the throttle throughout a curve**
 - a. Produces traction
 - b. Stabilizes the suspension, maintains ground clearance and prevents sudden shifts in traction distribution
 - c. Enables the rider to slow just prior to exiting the curve
 - d. Uses just enough traction to enable the bike to “stick” to the roadway as the curve is being made
4. **To select a safe overall speed for a particular corner, the three speeds that should be considered are?**
 - a. Roll, enter, balance
 - b. Slow, lean, look
 - c. Approach, entry, exit
 - d. Visual, anticipated, actual
5. **The major factors that determine how much traction is available are?**
 - a. Gravity and road camber
 - b. Approach speed, lean angle and ground clearance
 - c. Friction force between the tires and road surface
 - d. Motorcycle position, rider position and position of accessories
6. **The minimum following distance behind the vehicle ahead is?**
 - a. 4 seconds
 - b. 2 seconds
 - c. 12 seconds
 - d. 6 seconds
7. **The most important piece of personal protective equipment for a motorcyclist is?**
 - a. Face shield
 - b. Helmet
 - c. Gloves
 - d. All of the above
8. **The requirement for motorcycle safety applies to service members?**
 - a. Off duty and on installation only
 - b. On duty and on installation only
 - c. At all times on or off duty and on or off installation
 - d. On duty or off installation on official business
9. **The prime considerations when selecting an effective motorcycle helmet should include:**
 - a. Cost and manufacturer
 - b. Type (full, three quarter, half shell)
 - c. Construction (plastic, fiberglass, Kevlar)
 - d. Fit
 - e. a and b above
 - f. b, c and d above
10. **The largest cause(s) of single vehicle motorcycle crashes is (are):**
 - a. The rider running wide in a turn and running off of the roadway
 - b. The rider riding while intoxicated
 - c. The rider not wearing proper protective equipment
 - d. The rider failing to yield the right of way to other vehicles
 - e. a and b above