

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY



The days are getting longer and the weather warmer. Many soldiers are hitting the road on motorcycles. This is a fun and inexpensive form of transportation, but can also be dangerous. The inexperienced driver not aware of hazards, or not using common sense, could end up injured or dead! There are things you must know to survive road hazards:

- * Knowing how to ride is very important. Make sure that you know how to drive or ride a motorcycle. If you have not been riding a motorcycle for at least 5 years, do not consider yourself an "Experienced Rider". Take a refresher course on your new bike as soon as possible.

- * Don't buy or ride more motorcycle than you can handle. The bigger the motorcycle the more likely you are to out-drive your ability to control the motorcycle in an emergency. Bigger is not always better.

- * Motorcycle drivers are required to attend and successfully pass a Motor Cycle Safety Foundation Course as prescribed in AR Reg 385-10. Courses are offered by the Army Garrisons and Base Safety offices of other service branches. With the heavy amount of fast moving traffic on roads, freeways are not the place for OJT. Sport bike riders should take advantage of the new Military Sportbike Riders Course(MSRC) being offered at Army and Navy installations. Professional, high quality training is a necessity!

- * If not licensed to drive a motorcycle, DON'T! Driving a motorcycle without a license will get you in a jam with both the Army and civilian police. If you have a license, then only drive the type and size motorcycle for

which you have trained on. If you purchase a new bike, attend an Experienced Riders Course (ERC) to familiarize yourself with the handling characteristics.

HAZARDS OF THE ROAD

- * Most motorcycle accidents occur at intersections. Being alert and as visible as you can make yourself can prevent an accident. Learn how to spot a distracted car driver!

- * Watch for wet or oily road surfaces. They can cause loss of control very quickly.

- * Leaves, sand, gravel, ice, snow, and other obstructions are out to get you.

- * Watch out for cobble stone or brick streets. They are very slippery when wet. There is very little traction available on cobblestone, even under the best conditions.

* Don't drink and drive. One beer on a motorcycle is one too many.

* Animals are a life-threatening hazard! Slow down, especially during the hours of darkness and during mating season.

MAKE SURE THAT YOUR MOTORCYCLE IS READY FOR THE ROAD

Have the motorcycle as ready as you are:

* **Lubrication:** Check all lubrication requirements and ensure exposed lubricated equipment is clean and lubricated.

* **Engine :** Keep the engine tuned up and running properly.

* **Lights:** Make sure all lights are working and turn on headlights when riding.

* **Tires:** Tires are very important. Never ride on roadways with worn tires. They will hydroplane on wet roads. Check tire pressure often with the tires cold.

* **Mirrors:** Mirrors must be mounted on both sides of the bike and don't forget to make sure they are clean and properly adjusted.

* **PMCS:** Check the owner's manual for other maintenance requirements. Periodic adjustment of cables, chains, and other equipment is a necessity for safe operation of the motorcycle.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Have and use protective clothing and equipment:

* **Head protection:** Either DOT, Snell or the Host Nation equivalent (if overseas) are approved helmets. Never wear a helmet that has been in a collision.

* **Foot protection:** Foot and ankle protection is very important. Over the ankle leather boots are required. Make sure that the soles are in good shape and will grip the pavement when needed.

* **Gloves:** Wear gloves when you ride. Motorcycle gloves with protection for the backs of the fingers provide the best protection. Leather gloves afford some protection and cloth gloves almost none.

* **Eye protection:** Proper eye protection is a necessity. Face shields or motorcycle goggles are best. If you wear sunglasses make sure that they are shatter proof and have the ANSI standard stamped on

the earpiece. Plain old sunglasses hitting a bug at 50 miles an hour can cost you your eyesight.

* **Outer garments:** Outer garments made for motorcycle riding afford the best body protection. If you don't have special motorcycle garments, wear a jacket and have sleeves and pant legs rolled down. Make sure that what you wear can be seen. Bright colored outer garments can save you from an accident. Reflective jackets or vests are vital for safe operation during hours of darkness.

* **Passenger Safety:** Before taking a friend for a ride, make sure they too are dressed properly. This includes helmets, gloves, eye protection, long sleeves, long pants, and leather boots. Make sure they know how to be a good rider. Tell them how to lean during turns and then take a short slow test drive to let them get use to riding. Don't forget to adjust your motorcycle suspension and tire pressure for the added load. Consult your owner's manual!

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