Phi's Safety Tips
Riding into Intersections
Saturday, August 23rd

The number one cause of urban fatalities for motorcyclists are from cars making unprotected left turns violating bikers' rights of way. Motorcycle going straight, car turning left… crash. Most cagers state that they never saw the motorcycle. I contend that most cagers are not paying much attention. And that is why roundabouts may be too much for most American drivers. They require you to plan ahead, anticipate and adjust your speed and be aware of your surroundings. Traffic lights tell you when it is safe to proceed. You don't have to think about it.

The most common accident between cars and motorcycles is at an intersection when the automobile driver is making a left turn in front of a motorcycle. **Between 40% to 50% of all motorcycle accidents occur at intersections.**

When you are on your motorcycle, there is no place where you are more vulnerable than when you are in an intersection. Motorcycle riders face a much higher risk of involvement in an accident causing injury. When you drive through an intersection, your body is almost entirely exposed to traffic running on the street you are crossing.

If all you had to do was ride in a straight line, almost anybody could handle a motorcycle. But in the real world we have to negotiate turns with our bikes**. While it is convenient to think otherwise, it is simply not accurate to believe that making a right turn is exactly the same as making a left one except for direction. There really are different risks and realities involved.** That means that right turns are harder to negotiate than left turns at any given speed. It also means that in addition to being harder to negotiate, if you mismanage the turn and go wide, you will find yourself in a lane of traffic that is running in the opposite direction. In a left turn situation that you mismanage you will find yourself off the road entirely.

While making right turns involves greater lean angles at any particular speed than a corresponding left turn, there is usually MORE TRACTION available in a right turn than when turning to the left. This, because most roads are crowned. Thus, while turning to the right the road is cambered into the turn while turning left it is cambered away from the turn.

Left turns effectively provide you a narrower lane for use by your motorcycle. That is, because you must lean a motorcycle in order to make a turn, you cannot ride as far to the left within your lane when making a left turn as you might like without dragging your head or left grip across the center line and into the path of oncoming traffic. Unless there is a retaining wall involved, motorcycles can use their entire lane width when making right turns.

Making a right turn at an intersection is FAR LESS dangerous than making a left turn at that intersection. The most obvious reason being, of course, that you do not have to cross the path of any oncoming traffic to do so. (As an aside, a pedestrian crossing the street at an intersection is FAR LESS at risk if he keeps the center of the intersection to his right rather than to his left because immediate danger comes only from his left and less immediate danger comes from easily visible sources.)

Turning left has two other dangers that are not present when making right turns: (1) The possibility that your side stand is down and, because most road surfaces are crowned, (2) you cannot lean a bike as far in a left turn as you can in a right turn without dragging some part of the motorcycle against the pavement.

One final thought: If you make a left turn across an oncoming traffic lane your danger is not restricted solely to that oncoming traffic. Before you actually make your left turn you must do a head check to the left to insure that someone is not trying to pass you on the left! If you are struck by that passing vehicle **YOU ARE TO BLAME** as you have performed an unsafe lane change!!!!

Approaching an Intersection

The majority of accidents involving cars and motorcycles occur at intersections. Often, the car and motorcycle are traveling toward one another when the car driver fails to see the motorcycle and turns left, causing the motorcycle to collide head-on with the car. To avoid this type of accident, we should roll off the throttle and cover our brakes as we approach an intersection. Look for the traffic lights and other control devices to predict traffic movement and watch out for cars waiting to turn left. As you get closer, move to Position Two or Position Three. This increases the space between us and any left-turning vehicle. It will also increase our ability to see further down the road and increase our visibility to traffic potentially turning left.

We should also pay special attention approaching an intersection when in the right lane of two lanes heading in the same direction. If there is a car ahead in the lane to the left heading in our direction and it stops to turn left, it may block the view of oncoming drivers waiting to turn left, preventing them from seeing us. Also, the stopped car will block our vision preventing us from seeing the oncoming car. The oncoming car will not see us until we emerge from the blind spot and often this is only after the oncoming car turning left has already committed to making the left turn. It is advisable to proceed cautiously and move to Position Two or Three while approaching the intersection and resume Position One after passing through safely. Position One is the left side of the middle of the lane, Position Two is the middle of the lane and Position Three is the right side of the middle of the lane.

Another potential hazard facing motorcyclists approaching an intersection with the right-of-way, are vehicles that run the red light or stop sign and broadside the rider. It is always

advisable to roll off the throttle and scan all roads leading into the intersection for potential hazards.

Stopping at an Intersection

When stopping at an intersection, do not pull up immediately behind the vehicle in front. Instead, leave enough room to move around that vehicle if required. Creating a space allows room to move and prevent being rear-ended if the motorist behind fails to stop. If other vehicles do not stop behind you, watch your mirrors and do not disengage the clutch. Stay in gear and be ready to move forward to avoid being rear-ended. While stopped, watch your mirrors until you have two or three cars stopped behind you. They will act as a cushion protecting you if another motorist fails to stop.

Leaving an Intersection

When departing from an intersection, particularly after a red light, look both ways before moving forward. A common cause of accidents is motorists running yellow or red lights. The extra second may prevent you from being hit by an impatient driver running the light.

Phi's Quick Tips

1. When approaching an intersection where you need to stop, pay attention to the vehicles behind you. Make sure they are not to close. Also if you are following a large profile vehicle, drivers may not see you when they enter the intersection. Position yourself in the lane so drivers can see you.

2. When stopping at an intersection, do not pull up immediately behind the vehicle in front. Instead, leave enough room to move around that vehicle if required. Creating a space allows room to move and prevent being rear-ended if the motorist behind fails to stop. Scan for an escape route. Position your bike toward one edge of the lane or the other. Make sure your footing is good. Watch out for rocks, pebbles, or even oil on the road.

3. Stay in first gear and be ready to move forward to avoid being rear-ended.

4. When departing from an intersection, particularly after a red light, look both ways before moving forward. A common cause of accidents is motorists running yellow or red lights. The extra second may prevent you from being hit by an impatient driver running the light.

5. Try to avoid the dangerous intersections that you know are dangerous.

Have A Safe Ride!!!!!!