

Road Surface Riding Tips

Road design and maintenance factors can, and do, affect motorcycle crashes, injuries and fatalities. Design, construction, maintenance, and roadway practitioners can reduce hazards to motorcyclists and other road users by considering motorcyclist safety.

- Potholes pose a greater hazard to the operation of motorcycles than to larger vehicles. **Be vigilante on looking out for them.**
- The use of thermoplastics, particularly for broad, horizontal intersection lines, can create slippery surfaces for motorcycles that stop at the intersections. Metal road surface components – either temporary or permanent – offer limited traction in many cases, and, when wet, are difficult to see. **These surfaces can be very slippery especially when wet.**
- Untapered vertical shoulder drop-offs are even more dangerous for motorcycles than for other vehicles. Milled surfaces, parallel paving lane joints, parallel grids on bridges, steel plates, and other uneven roadway surfaces can be especially hazardous for motorcycles. **Cross these milled surfaces on at least a 45° angle.**
- A motorcycle's traction can be seriously compromised by "tar snakes" – excess asphalt or other sealants used for crack repair. **Look for these as you ride.**
- Signage targeted toward motorcyclists can warn of conditions that are especially hazardous for them. These might include uneven pavement surfaces, rumble strips or crosswinds. Keep in mind that many motorcycles have only a single headlamp for illumination. **Pay attention to these signs as you ride.**

UNEVEN SURFACES OR OBSTACLES

Uneven surfaces or obstacles such as broken pavement, bumps, potholes, railroad tracks, and loose debris pose a separate danger to the rider. The rider must first be able to identify the obstacle and next determine whether there is sufficient time and opportunity to safely clear the obstacle. If both time and space permit, the rider should slow the cycle or change lane positions to avoid the obstacle. If posed with having to ride over or clear the obstacle, the rider should approach at a ninety degree angle (90°). It is important in clearing an obstacle that a rider:

1- Slow the cycle to reduce impact.

2- Make certain the cycle is straight up.

3- Just prior to reaching the obstacle, accelerate slightly to lighten the front wheel.

4- Rise slightly off the seat with weight on the foot pegs to minimize the chances of being thrown from the bike. Rising slightly off the seat allows the rider to absorb and transfer the shock of the obstacle to the rider's knees and elbows.

5- Pull off the road to check tires and rims before proceeding.

RAILROAD OR TROLLEY TRACKS

Motorcycle riders are able to safely cross railroad tracks at angles as sharp as 45°. Riders are discouraged from altering their ordinary course of travel to cross railroad tracks at ninety degree angles (90°). This action may be more dangerous and result in the rider crossing into on-coming traffic. Motorcycle riders must proceed more cautiously when crossing trolley tracks or pavement seams. Trolley tracks or pavement seams running parallel to a rider's course of travel are considered "edge-traps" and may cause loss of balance or cycle control. It is recommended that riders make a quick and sharp turn across trolley tracks and pavement seams. **Riders are encouraged to cross trolley tracks or pavement seams at angles of at least forty-five degrees (45°).**

GROOVES AND GRATINGS

Riding over rain grooves or metal bridge gratings may cause the motorcycle to weave and can create an unsettling feeling for the rider. Typically this activity is not dangerous provided the rider limits sudden or extreme movements while attempting to cross these types of surfaces. **It is important for riders to maintain their speed and direction until safely on solid road surfaces.**

SWERVING OR TURNING QUICKLY

Even cautious riders may be forced to swerve or turn quickly to avoid hitting an object in their path of travel. This sudden adjustment or evasive maneuver may be the only way for a rider to avoid a collision and serious injury. It is important for riders to remain in their lane of travel in the event of an emergency. Even when the obstacle is a motor vehicle, often there is sufficient space within the lane for the rider to safely pass. A good rider will adjust body and cycle position while remaining focused on the obstacle. A swerve can be described as any sudden change in direction by the rider. It can be either two quick turns or a rapid shift to the side. This maneuver can be safely performed by applying a small amount of hand pressure to the handle grip in the direction a rider wishes to travel. This action will cause the motorcycle to lean quickly. The sharper the turn, the more the motorcycle will lean. When safely past the hazard, apply a small amount of hand pressure to the opposite handle grip to return the cycle to its original direction of travel. It is important when performing such a maneuver to keep knees snugly against the tank with feet firmly planted on the foot pegs for added stability and cycle control. Do not attempt to lean with the motorcycle; let the motorcycle move beneath you. Riders should not attempt to brake while swerving, as a skid could result and endanger the rider.