

Drive Defensively:

Be especially alert at intersections because approximately 50 percent of motorcycle-vehicle collisions occur there! Watch for vehicles that may unexpectedly turn in front of you or pull out from a side street or driveway. At intersections where vision is limited by shrubbery, parked vehicles, or buildings, slow down, make doubly sure of traffic, and be prepared to react quickly.

- Check the rearview mirrors before changing lanes or stopping. A quick stop without checking rear traffic may result in a rear-end crash. When changing lanes, use signals and make a visual check to assure that you can change lanes safely.
- Watch the road surface and traffic ahead to anticipate problems and road hazards. Road hazards that are minor irritations for an automobile can be a major hazard for a rider. Hazards include potholes, oil slicks, puddles, debris or other objects on the roadway, ruts, uneven pavement, and railroad tracks. Painted roadway markings and manhole covers can be extremely slippery when wet. Go around most hazards. To do so safely, you must be able to spot such hazards from a distance. Slow down before reaching the obstacle and make sure you have enough room before changing direction. Railroad tracks should be crossed at an angle as close to 90 degrees as possible.
- Experienced motorcyclists often have this advice for new riders: "Assume that you are invisible to other motorists and operate your motorcycle accordingly." Position yourself to be seen. Ride in the portion of the lane where it is most likely that you will be seen by other motorists. Avoid the car's "No Zone" (i.e., blind spot). Use your headlights, day and night. All motor vehicles have blind spots where other vehicles cannot be seen with mirrors. These blind spots are to the left and right rear of the vehicle. Do not linger in motorists' blind spots. Wear brightly colored, preferably fluorescent, clothing. Use retro-reflective materials on clothing and motorcycle, especially at night.
- Maintain a safe speed consistent with driving conditions and your capabilities. Gravel on the road and slippery road surfaces can be hazardous. Avoid sudden braking or turning. When riding in the rain, riders find they get better traction by driving in the tracks of vehicles in front of them. But avoid following too closely and riding on painted lines and metal surfaces such as manhole covers because they offer less traction. If caught in a sudden shower while riding, pull off the highway under some shelter (e.g., overpass) and wait for the rain to stop. If you must ride in the rain, remember that conditions are most dangerous during the first few minutes of rainfall because of oil and other automobile droppings on the roadway. If possible, sit out the beginning of a rain shower. Don't tailgate, and don't let other drivers tailgate you. Following too closely behind another vehicle may make it difficult for you to brake suddenly. Further, you won't have time to avoid road hazards and traffic situations ahead. If another vehicle is following too closely, wave it off with a hand signal or tap your brake pedal. If they continue to follow too closely, change lanes or pull off the road, and let them pass. Pass only when it is safe to do so. Do not pass or ride on the shoulder. Pull over to the left third of the lane before passing and make sure that you are at a safe following distance. Use turn signals and avoid crowding the other vehicle as you pass. Remember to make a head check before changing lanes. Use brakes wisely. Use both brakes together. Brake firmly and progressively and bring the motorcycle upright before stopping. Remember that driving through water can adversely affect the brakes. After passing through water, look for following traffic, and when safe to do so check your brakes by applying light pressure. Dogs can be a problem for riders. Don't become distracted and don't kick at a dog. As you approach a dog, downshift, when you reach the dog, accelerate quickly away.

By: Mike McGlaughlin - Road Captain on 7/18/17