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Target Fixation Rather than let it lead you into trouble, use it

By: James R. Davis

Sometimes we riders tend to minimize the risks we hear about. Take, for example, what every student of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation has heard about - 'target fixation'. 'Fixating' on something means not being able to take your attention (your eyes, for example) away from it. In the case of riding motorcycles, for example, this leads to the phenomena wherein our motorcycles tend to go in the direction we are looking and is usually described with an example familiar to all -- that if you see a pothole in the street ahead of you and don't take your eyes off it you are likely to hit it.

While that is true, it is too trivial an example to get our attention appropriately. We are left with the opinion that 'target fixation' is of trivial concern because we all know that we can, if we try, avoid that pothole.

In the [case study](#) we talk at great length about the tragic consequences possible from thinking that target fixation is a trivial problem. You are strongly encouraged to read that case study. While it is more graphic than most will be comfortable with, I can think of nothing that will better make the case for respecting the danger of target fixation.

It is insufficient to simply post the advise that you should avoid target fixation. Saying "don't fixate" is all very well, but once it starts, you need a positive technique to get yourself out in one piece. So once you are in trouble, *use target fixation* to save your skin.

Don't look at the oncoming truck/tree/pothole; figure out where you would rather be *and fixate on that instead*. In fact, those of you that have taken the MSF classes know that "target fixation" is an excellent way to control skids - fixate on a point dead ahead on the horizon, and you'll be well on the way towards automatically correcting most skids.

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(James R. Davis is a recognized [expert witness](#) in the fields of Motorcycle Safety/Dynamics.)

Presented By: Gwynn Romano – 2nd Officer on 11/15/16