

Gas Station Hazards- Steve Warmath, Safety Officer (Contributing editor, Rick Hendricks)



I have often asked the members of the Chapter to share with me any ideas or incidents that we can either learn from or remind ourselves of the numerous dangers lurking out there and the risk we must manage to be competent and safe riders. When Rick Hendricks, this month's contributing editor, and I were flying in the military, we got our monthly safety magazine (the military's version of "Flying" magazine) that usually had several accident/ incident reports that the rest of us pilots could learn from and hopefully not repeat, especially with a 20 million dollar aircraft. I have learned from experience that safety is not a one-time learning process but the repetition of being reminded about these hazards so they become ingrained in our thought process.

Rick writes; Some thoughts on using gas stations...by golly, those pumps are dangerous! And not just because of the flammable stuff we're pumping into our tanks.

We all use them. We can't ride without it. When the big "E" approaches, we just have to stop and get more gas. But most of the time we get by (buy?) without any thoughts of the hazards present at the pump and fortunately, without any mishaps. But when you least expect it, boom (or should I say crunch), Murphy strikes!

Stopping

I'm sure it's happened to you. Not frequently, but once in a while it sneaks up on you because you weren't paying attention. You know, slip sliding to a stop at the pump, gracefully or not. There is a high probability of spilled gas (from overfilling) or oil leakage (from poorly maintained vehicles) from the previous refueling contestants on the pavement that YOU are now trying to use to position your bike for refueling. Bikes without ABS on the front wheel (and even with ABS at slow speed because it kicks off at around 3-5 mph) can very easily lock up the wheel that provides you steering when you try to stop on an oil soaked surface. You are now at risk of dropping the bike. Even at that slow speed, dropping it can result in injury as you (not the bike) contact the pump, the metal protective posts (barriers) or the cement island itself. This problem is exacerbated if it's raining or has been raining. Water seems to amplify the slickness of petroleum products including anti-freeze. Remember, in the summer radiator coolant in cars and trucks can and will boil over into and then out of the overflow tanks and onto the pavement. You must continually scan for hazards as you enter the station just as you would scan for hazards on the open road, and act accordingly. That usually means slowing way down or stopping prior to the pump and "walking" the bike into position.



Standing and dismounting

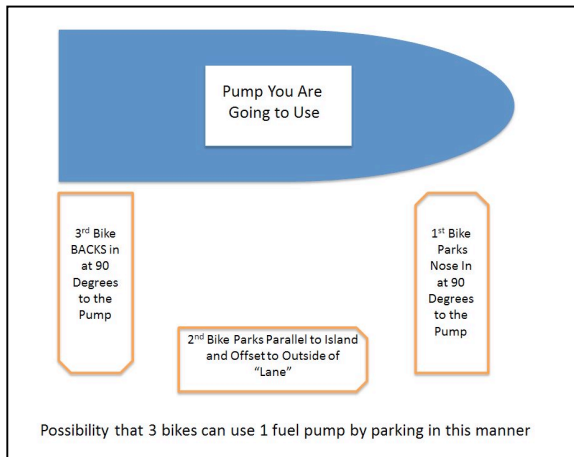
Congratulations, you've managed to stop the bike successfully without locking up either brake and are remaining upright. Now, however, your size 11's are tasked with supporting you and the bike even though they (your boots) are now standing, or trying to stand, on that slick, oily surface. Your personal friction coefficient is now somewhere close to zero. At best, the brakes hold your bike stationary as you grasp the right hand grip when suddenly, your feet scoot out from under you while simultaneously trying to hold the bike upright. At worst...oops, down you go. You discover, or re-discover, that you cannot relax until the bike is successfully on the side stand and NOT moving anymore. As the saying goes, "then, and only then, are you free to move about the fuel pumps".



Protecting my "lane" at the gas pump

I'm at the pump, just finished pumping, replaced the hose and completed the payment process. Now I want to retrieve something from or place something into my saddlebags. It never fails that when I do, someone named Mr. Inconsiderate, Mrs. Impatient, Mr. Varsity Too Busy Cell Phoning my Cheerleader Babe, or MS. Texting My Friends uses my lane at the pumps to exit or enter the station. I'm at risk, my friends, because my obviously too small to be seen Derry is out in the Air as I bend over to access said saddlebag. To prevent that from happening anymore, I've reassessed my approach to parking at the pumps. I now park at a 90 degree angle to the island. My bike now

occupies the whole “lane” crossways and gives me some protection by preventing those who might otherwise be distracted from using any part of MY pavement. I find it also gives me more space in which to conduct the refueling process instead of me squeezing in between bike and island. Try it and let me know what you think. On group rides we can conceivably get 2 – 3 bikes at each pump by parking in this manner. (See below.)



In summary then, try to remember that our friction footprint is extremely small and the pavement surface in and around gas stations ranges from less than desirable to very slippery. Considering the dangers present there, this is truly a time to stay aware, keep the shiny side up and protect your space.

Oh, and of course that stuff we're pumping into our tanks is flammable. It goes without saying that overfilling and having it spill onto a hot engine or items of clothing (or your skin) is downright dangerous. **Use caution, focus, and devote your complete attention to the task while dispensing fuel. Safe riding!!**

“Be careful out there...it’s a jungle.”

Steve