

REACTION TIME

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The time it takes between perceiving a stimulus and reacting to it is called reaction time. That happens every time you are riding and see something in the roadway ahead of you and you take the necessary steps to avoid the obstacle. The average

reaction time is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second. Some of you may have had to pass a reaction time test if you were in the military and needed to pass a driving exam to be able to operate military vehicles. Or maybe it was when you took driver's education in high school.

It went something like this: you sat in a chair with your right foot on one of two pedals watching a monitor that displayed a green light. When the light turned red, you had to move your foot to the other pedal to simulate braking and the device timed your reaction.

So why is that important to you? Well, at 55mph, you are traveling more than 80 feet per second. In $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second, you will have travelled over 60 feet. That is the distance between when you perceive a threat until you react to the threat. If you cannot fathom how far 60 feet is, just imagine the width of a typical roadway lane which is 12 feet. Now put five of them side by side and you will have 60 feet! At 55mph, you will travel 5 lane widths between the time you see something until the time you begin to take any action.

Oddly enough, the typical perception time is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second so perception time and reaction time is 1.5 seconds. In a perfect world, you will travel about 120 feet at 55mph between the time you encounter a hazard

until you begin to react to it. The width of 10 roadway lanes. And you still must take whatever action is necessary to avoid the hazard.

There are things that will impact your perception/reaction time. Things like alcohol consumption, fatigue, distractions, and (I have to say this...) age. There are some things you can control, like alcohol consumption and distractions so take charge of your ride. Be in control!

If you recall an article I wrote several months ago where

I talked about moving around in your lane when you see oncoming traffic, then you already have a method to eliminate distractions by making it a game to not let oncoming traffic pass you while you are in LP1, the lane position closest to the centerline.



If you want to know where you stand on reaction time, show up at the next meeting. I have an exercise that will demonstrate what your reaction time is and it is fun!

The take away from this is that you must always be paying attention while you ride so that you don't get caught short and end up in an unfortunate situation. That means if your bike is equipped with ABS, you should never have to engage it while riding as a rule.

If you do, your perception/reaction time may not have been ideal.

ATTGAT,
MARK