

H A B I T S

Mark Welch — Safety Officer



I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays. If you did not get to make it to the HOG Christmas party, just let me say that you missed out on a wonderful time! Many thanks to all those responsible for putting it all together, you guys are awesome.

A huge shout out to Joy and Kelly for their organizational skills and all the hard work to make the party a success.

I may have mentioned this before in an article, but we are all creatures of habit. I bet someone reading this will say, “maybe everyone else is, but not me!” I can prove to you that we are creatures of habit. Take your hands and place them together, interlocking your fingers. Look at your thumbs and see which one is on top. Now take your hands apart and do it again but this time when you interlock your fingers, make certain the opposite thumb is on top. I bet that feels weird to you. Want more proof? Fold your arms across your chest and look down to see which arm is on top. Take them apart and fold them across your chest again, this time with the arm that was on top now on the bottom. Can you even fold them that way? If you are still in denial, when you brush your teeth the next time, don’t use the hand you normally use, brush them with the opposite hand. About the second time you jab yourself in the gums, you will say to yourself, “Mark was right, I’m a creature of habit!”

Safe motorcycle riding involves incorporating safe habits. Think about how you start your bike, do you practice safe habits? After you have performed the pre-ride inspection and have donned all your safety gear and mounted your bike, it is time to fire up the engine. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation has an acronym for starting the engine: FINE-C. F = fuel valve (although this is becoming outdated with fuel injected engines); I = ignition; N = neutral; E = engine cutoff switch; C = clutch.

If you have ever started your bike in first gear, even with the clutch pulled all the way back, you would have noticed your bike lurch forward when you pressed the starter. Although the clutch is disengaged, there is still a small amount of friction present until the fluid in the clutch is properly dispersed. It is so important to shift into neutral to start your bike that Harley has been including a safety device on their later model bikes. If the transmission is not in neutral, the starter won’t work. So an important habit to get into is to always put your bike in neutral before you starting the engine.

There is also a shutdown procedure to go through when it is time to turn the engine off. You should always turn the engine off by using the engine cutoff switch by your right thumb. All those controls are at your fingertips on purpose and that is so you do not have to take your hands off of the handlebars to operate the motorcycle. It is important to develop this habit because under stress, you will do what you have always done. If you only turn the engine off by use of the ignition, under stress, that is how you will resort to turning it off. If, on the other hand, (get it?) you always use the engine cutoff switch, under stress a simple movement of the right thumb and you will have shut down the engine. As soon as the engine has stopped, the you can turn off the ignition. Lastly, don’t forget to turn off your fuel valve if your bike has one. This is especially important if you keep your bike in your garage. Should a needle valve get stuck, a lot of fuel can leak out which can be extra dangerous in a closed in space. Not to mention gas prices are on the rise again and who wants all that money pouring out onto the floor?

One more thing, don’t forget your side stand! Park your motorcycle in first gear so it won’t roll. Before dismounting, with your hand off the clutch, push forward on the bike and take the play out of the gears to prevent the bike from moving and causing the side stand to return to its upright position. (to paraphrase a flight attendant.)

Head and eyes!

Mark