

Safety Corner



As I begin this, my final article as the Tallahassee HOG Safety Officer, I want to thank all of you for your positive comments regarding the safety articles and I sincerely hope I have made some difference in how you look at the safety issues in-

involved in riding a motorcycle. I have enjoyed being the Safety Officer; however I feel it is time to pass the reins to another member of the chapter and I wish them well.

This month's article will focus on riding in high winds and is at the request of one of our members. Riding in high winds can certainly create uncertainty on occasion and is something we all have experienced or can expect to at some point during our riding experiences. High winds can result from a myriad of weather related issues from a nearby tropical weather pattern, a

weather front or just some freakish winds that we happen to unexpectedly encounter. Fortunately for us, we do not have prevailing conditions that can create winds of 50+ miles per hour or greater on a regular basis

If while riding you were to encounter strong cross winds, the best thing you can do is, surprisingly, little to nothing,



and your bike will handle most winds of this kind just fine with little effort on your part. In such an encounter, ride in the center of your lane and relax your grip on the handlebars just a bit to avoid over controlling the bike. Try to keep your body relaxed. Your arms should be bent and not stiff. If your arms are straight and tense and you're really gripping your bike, any movement of your upper torso will result in your motorcycle moving or shifting as well. You should know right now that you are not going to keep the bike in an absolutely straight line,

but rather to a certain degree the bike is going to move laterally. It is virtually impossible to prevent and it is suggested that you do not try to fight minor movements. If you have a windshield, lean down and let the windshield deflect the wind, if you don't have a windshield, lean down as

much as your safely can and reduce your

(Continued on page 5)

profile. If you are wearing a jacket, make sure it is zipped up to avoid a billowing parachute effect which may add to any discomfort you may already be feeling.

If you encounter high cross winds while you are in a turn, your bike may be blown from your intended course however a normal and modest counter steer should bring it back. Correct your steering, gently, and keep going. Traction in this situation will not be affected and how much you need to lean will be commensurate with the forces acting against you. Dial down your speed only if you are going too fast and continue to negotiate the curve as you normally would.

If you are traveling along an interstate at speed and encounter one or more large semi's, you should know from experience that they will create some measure of wind shear that will severely buffet you as you or they pass. In either case, you might steer the bike away from the source of the wind shear by changing lanes or reducing speed to allow the truck to move further away. If you are going to pass the semi, give yourself all the leeway you can to minimize the buffeting effect and maintain a good firm grip on your control surfaces and move past it quickly.

Some might inquire whether or not certain bikes experience a greater or lesser resistance when encountering these winds, and in my opinion, I would say yes. I have spoken with a number of riders who enjoy the sport and have consistently heard that bikes with a greater surface area such as solid wheels are more prone to experiencing a greater resistance to the wind than bikes that have open cast or spoke wheels. Common sense would seem to bear this out, for one catches the wind and the other allows it to pass on through practically unchallenged. The same might be said of large touring bikes such as the Honda Gold Wing which are virtually one solid mass that can catch the wind as opposed to a bike with a

frame and structure that allows wind to travel through instead of acting as a solid sail.

In closing there are basically two identifiable situations when strong crosswinds will create lateral movement with your motorcycle, when they first hit you and then again when they abate. Keep this in mind and do not overcorrect when you feel either occur. If the winds are to such an extent that you are completely uncomfortable with them, then perhaps you might want to consider parking the bike and waiting for the winds to lessen.

As always ride safe, enjoy the coming cooler weather and always keep in mind that your safety is to some extent within your control.

Jerry

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