

**Crossroads HOG
Safety Thought for
January 2011**

Riding with ABS

Most of my presentation at the January 23 meeting will deal with our chapter's training offerings for 2011. However, I do have a brief safety tip for your consideration.

Riding with ABS? ABS has been available on Harley Davidson motorcycles for a couple of years now and it is, indeed, a great aid in safely making a sudden stop and stopping on wet pavement. If you have it on your bike, practice with it (in a parking lot) so that you know what it feels like, what it sounds like, and what it does for you.

There is, however, one drawback to ABS on a motorcycle and, living in Southeastern Michigan, you should be aware of it. ABS can be detrimental; it can actually lengthen your stopping distance on a gravel road surface. Think about how ABS works and you'll understand. ABS does not increase the 'grip' or traction of your tires; it only prevents the brakes from stopping the wheel (skidding).

When you are on wet surfaces the tractive capability of the tire is greater when it is turning than when it is sliding. ABS assures that your tire keeps turning at a constantly reducing speed.

When you are on gravel, your tire(s) are not in constant contact with the surface. As you apply brake, the potential to lock up the wheel is increased. Consequently the ABS system activates sooner than it does on a solid surface. You cannot lock up the wheels. On dirt or gravel roads a bike ridden by a competent rider probably could stop more quickly with the rear wheel locked up and skidding. Notice that I said REAR WHEEL. As you know, sliding the front wheel is a bad thing. I also said probably.

There are no studies that I can find that verify this. However, there are numerous riders' claims, letters to magazines' safety authors, etc. that describe this occurrence in detail.

SO – those of you with ABS – when you find it necessary to ride on any of Michigan's "improved" roads – please remember that you probably need more distance to get stopped than you expect. As always, it is the rider's intelligence, training, and skill that are the real safety equipment.

Mike "the safety guy" Hoffman