

CROSSROADS HOG
SAFETY THOUGHT FOR
NOVEMBER 2009

You're riding (or driving) down the road. It's a beautiful afternoon in all ways then, suddenly, a car passes you and you are shocked!! "Where did he come from?" Then, after a couple of seconds you realize that you have not been checking your mirrors. You never saw him approaching.

At some point this is a common scenario for all of us. It happens when we are riding our motorcycles and it happens when we are driving a car or truck. Regardless of how experienced we might be, it happens.

This month's Safety Thought is coming to you out of my experiences, a little research, and a great reminder in the form of an article in RIDER magazine by Eric Trow. What I'm talking about is CIRCADIAN Rhythm. And it's something we should all be aware of because it has a very direct effect on our ability to ride safely.

Each afternoon, usually about 8 hours after we wake in the morning, our body's metabolism slows. When that happens our attentiveness drops off; our ability to scan, identify, predict, decide and enact slips to a lower level. Our tendency to "fixate" on something in front of us increases and our awareness that it is happening diminishes. I am sure you can see how this affects our ability to ride (or drive) at our best.

Mr. Trow notes in his article that, while working with the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, he learned that it is impossible for us (any of us) to tell when we are about to fall asleep. That certainly explains why drivers (and riders) sometimes just "ride off the road."

So, what can we do? Here are a few tips that you can use to help you avoid this danger.

- Get a good night's sleep before the day of a ride.
- Pay attention to yourself – know your typical "clock" – when do you get drowsy?
- Take a power nap – it works for the astronauts. Just 15 or 20 minutes will make a huge difference.
- Stop for a coffee break.
- Slow down or 'call it a day.' Stopping early can save your life. Be honest with yourself.

How do we know when our CIRCADIAN Rhythm is affecting us? As I said earlier, we cannot know when we are about to fall asleep but there are a couple of things that can serve as a warning.

Consider yourself warned IF:

- you find yourself focusing lower – closer to the front of the bike – than normal.
- you find yourself being surprised by a passing vehicle.
- you don't remember driving past a familiar landmark – that you must have passed.

Oh – and if you're dozing off now, during this riveting presentation – intended to help you avoid pain and suffering – it's far too early in the day to blame CIRCADIAN Rhythm.

Mike – the safety guy