

Crossroads HOG

Safety Thought

September 2009

COMMUNICATE!!!!

I cannot count the number of times I have admonished riders to always go overboard in their attempts to communicate to the vehicles/drivers/riders around them. This includes using hand signals as well as the signals on the bike; making eye contact with operators of vehicles sharing the road with you – or about to. Keeping the headlight on and wearing clothing that is ‘conspicuous’ to help others see you.

My experience has shown me that we are all quite good at this when participating in a group ride. Perhaps this is due to our training. Perhaps it is due to the example set by those riding with us. The fact is we do communicate well when we ride together. I can only hope that we do so when we are riding solo or with only a couple of friends.

I want to remind you of a need for communication that we all, very often, overlook, however. While participating in a group ride recently, I observed this to be quite common. That alerted me to watch for it in other situations and I find that we would all do well with a little reminder. So, here it is.

As motorcyclists we are all quite adept at using downshifting as a means to decelerate. It is a proven, safe, and appropriate technique to augment braking. However, we need to realize that when we downshift to reduce speed there is no communication to the vehicles/drivers/riders around us. Our bike is slowing but we are depending on others to notice that without any overt communication.

It is a good idea to activate your brake light when you downshift. Just touching the brake pedal or squeezing the hand brake will do it. You don't really need to activate the brake but you do need to **LIGHT THE BRAKE LIGHT**. This will tell those behind you that you are slowing. This will remove your assumption that they will notice merely by the distance between them and you. It will get their attention!

Do this all the time – in group riding as well as solo cruising. It might save your life!!

That's my safety thought for you this month. I hope it is helpful.

Mike “the safety guy” Hoffman

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