

## **Rider Education: A continuing Awareness**

### **Look 12 Seconds Ahead**

Looking twelve seconds ahead is a good habit to get into, but we're talking about more than just staring down the road with glazed eyeballs. We need to be good observers. By observe I mean really keeping our eyes moving to take in as much as possible, and making judgment calls about what's happening.

Try this exercise right now: Go back and read the previous paragraph again, but this time read one line at a time, and spend 2 seconds scrutinizing the world around you before reading the next line. See if you can remember what you're reading while also observing details of what's happening around you---the current time, what TV channel is on, who else is in the room, the color of the car driving by, what pictures are on the wall behind you, and so forth. It's not easy, is it? The temptation is either to look around and stop reading, or continue reading and ignore the observing. But don't we do something similar as we simultaneously ride the bike and observe traffic around us? And consider this: Once you record in your memory what time it is or who else is in the room, you have a pretty good idea of what's going on. The only items you need to study on subsequent glances are things that have changed.

It's the same way in traffic. We need to be aware of everything, but we can focus momentarily on those things that are in the process of becoming potential hazards. For example, the big rattling car transporter rolling in the next lane may scream for attention, but one or two glances may confirm that it's not really a problem. That oncoming car approaching the intersection ahead isn't demanding attention, but I know that left-turners are a frequent hazard for motorcyclists, so I need to focus on that car, not on the noisy truck.

Intersections are danger zones where we especially need to focus our attention. Folks with poor judgment are very likely to make mistakes at intersections, pulling out in front of other drivers, making quick turns, jamming on the brakes, or motoring through red lights. Recognize that intersections are anywhere vehicles can cross paths, whether they are divided eight-lane arterials or two lanes that cross in the shopping mall parking lot.

For the record, about three-fourths of all motorcycle crashes are collisions with cars, and about one-fourth of all motorcycle crashes are the result of car drivers making quick left turns across the paths of motorcyclists.

It's also worthwhile to note that collisions with cars zooming out of alleys account for a good percentage of intersection smashos, and disproportionate share of motorcyclist fatalities. Never mind who is at fault, the motorcyclist is the one who gets hurt.