

Rider Education: A continuing Awareness : Group Riding Hazards, Part II

But we don't really ride fast!!!!

I've been in a number of group rides that were faster than I would have preferred. And I've led a few rides that, in retrospect, were faster than I should have allowed. There's something about motorcycling that brings out our competitive spirit. "You think your fast, watch this!" It's easy to get stampeded into riding a lot faster than you feel is safe. And it's just not macho to say anything about the pace.

Some groups are more aggressive than others. And once I figure out the general riding style, I may separate myself from the group. I've even "made a wrong turn" once in a while to get away from a group that I considered dangerous. If I want to ride aggressively, I'd rather ride by myself and not have to squander my attention on other riders around me.

I've noticed that experienced riders tend to jack up the speed year by year. If nothing happens, it seems to make sense to ride a little faster than you did last year. You've also gained a little additional skill and knowledge, and that allows you to ride faster without getting into trouble. Many of the big-mileage riders I know ride very fast. That's their decision, but the error is believing that three or four very fast riders can ride together at a higher speed. I've known a number of those veteran riders who eventually jacked speed up until they crashed. And, as the crash between Betty and Bob reminds us, it's not so much the skill level or experience of the riders that allows accidents to happen, but rather, hazards that occur without warning. We can be in control of our bikes, but not necessarily in control of the situation.

Years ago our club invited a motorcycle officer as our guest speaker. When asked about riding with another officer, he was very proud that they rode side-by-side in the same lane. He bragged that he and his partner knew each other so well that they trusted their lives to each other. But yet he didn't have a ready answer for what they would do if one rider encountered a pothole or edge trap that required one of them to do an evasive maneuver.

It's not a question of trusting your riding partner, but of not trusting the situation. I'd rather have more options for what to do when the unexpected happens---say a large pothole in one wheel track, or a truck driveshaft in the road.

Additional articles will be written in the next few months. (Article in Motorcycle Consumer News)

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