

Safety Tips #10

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Just Stop It!!!!

Let's talk about stop signs, and our behavior around them.

I have two major points to make.

When you are coming to a stop at a stop sign, do you stop at the sign, or do you stop beyond the sign, perhaps at the actual corner of the intersection?

When I ride my bike on a larger street, and there are numerous smaller streets that intersect with the larger one, many of them have stop signs near the intersection. I am always chagrined to see that drivers almost NEVER stop at the sign; they stop (if they stop at all!) beyond the sign, nearer to the corner. This is bad news for me, because I can't really tell if they are going to stop at all, as they cruise right past the sign towards my intended path of travel. Most of them do eventually stop, but by then I have had to make preparations for sudden evasive maneuvers, which I wouldn't have had to do if they had stopped where the sign is. It's a pet peeve of mine. I would never do such a thing... uh... would I?

I decided to check my own riding habits with regard to this. Guess what I found? I am one of the offenders! I tend to stop beyond the stop sign, like all those other "morons" out there. Geez, what a hypocrite. I've now changed my ways, and I stop at the sign, like I'm supposed to. This makes it easier on traffic which is traveling on the larger street, and is also considerate of any pedestrians who may be trying to cross the street on which you have been traveling.

The other issue is: actually coming to a full stop, as opposed to what I've heard called a "California rolling stop." (I don't know why California is singled out here... talk amongst yourselves.)

There are several benefits to coming to a complete stop at the stop sign. 1) You give other drivers a longer chance to recognize your presence, 2) You give yourself more time to assess the situation on the road you are about to enter. In the wise words of motorcycling author David Hough, “Rushing into an intersection isn’t wise. If you are not prepared for a stop when you realize your path is blocked, it’s difficult to keep the bike under control.” And, 3) You won’t get a traffic citation for running a stop sign!

So, stop (at the sign), look both ways, make a plan, and bust a move.