

## **Safety Tips # 21**

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#### **Passengers**

In Safety Tips #16 we discussed correct ways to load your bike. But, what's the largest and heaviest item you may ever put on the machine? That would be a passenger... Carrying such a large and heavy load presents challenges, which are compounded by the facts that the passenger is not strapped on, is capable of moving around all by his/herself, and has a mind and emotions as well. And the passenger is likely to have less experience on a bike than you, the rider, do. Moreover, there is only one place to put a passenger on a bike; no alternatives are available (sidecar pilots have an exception to that rule...). A bike must have both a dedicated passenger seat and footpegs or floorboards.

There are some guidelines for carrying a live human on your bike, so let's deal with those.

A potential passenger should know what they're getting into. In rider education some of the first things we discuss in class is risk awareness and risk acceptance, which is followed by risk management. Riders should have a background in those things; shouldn't passengers as well? Passengers need to know that there is risk in being on a bike, and they must be willing to sustain that risk in order to be allowed to ride. After that, we must deal with managing (minimizing) the risk.

Passengers should be attired in the same type and quality of riding gear that the rider should be wearing. They should know to hold onto to either a solidly-mounted part of the bike that is designed for that purpose, or to the rider's waist or hips. They should know that the bike will lean when it turns, and they should lean with it

(not more, to “help,” and not less, either). They should know that when the bike is slowing they should resist sliding forward into the rider; this can be accomplished by applying pressure on the footpegs and/or resisting forward motion with their grip on their passenger hand-hold. They should know that, when the bike accelerates, they will tend to slide to the rear of the seat, and that should be resisted as well. I am a big believer in using a passenger backrest on the bike. I have heard too many stories of passengers sliding off the back of the bike when it is under acceleration!

Tell the passenger that there are hot parts and moving parts on the bike which must be avoided, and to keep their feet on the footpegs, even when the bike is not in motion.

Tell them to look over your right shoulder when the bike is turning right, and over your left shoulder when it is turning left.

Your riding style should be modified when carrying a passenger. For one thing, you are now responsible for the well-being of another person. Moreover, a bike will not respond with a passenger on it the same way it will without a passenger. It will not accelerate as quickly, it will not stop as quickly, and it will not be as nimble in the turns. (Good news here is that you can use a little more of the rear brake with less chance of a skid, because of the added weight over the rear wheel.) Basically, ride more conservatively on the whole trip. The bike might also bottom out its suspension and/or scrape parts more readily when it is leaning. Remember to adjust the air pressure in the tires and to adjust the bikes suspension to accommodate the extra weight.

It's often fun to share the ride with a passenger if you take the necessary precautions.