

Safety Tips #28

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“I Had to Lay It Down.” Really???

Often, when people hear that I am in the motorcycle safety business, I get another opportunity to hear about someone's crash. Many times I hear the statement “I had to lay it down.” Let's talk about this today.

“Laying it down” is *causing* a crash. Now, I know nobody does this for no reason at all. And there are probably some situations in which doing so is the lesser of two (or more) evils; but I am here to tell you that, if there are any good reasons for intentionally putting your bike down, and you, and maybe your passenger, down with it, they are very few and very far between.

When I hear about how somebody had to lay it down, the story begins with one “reason” for this drastic maneuver, such as, “A car turned in front of me.” What I almost never hear is that there was a long chain of events that led up to

the incident, such as, “I was going too fast, it was night time and raining, I was tired/not sober/irritated/not paying full attention/etc., and *then* a car turned in front of me. And, oh yeah, I never have had any formal rider training to prepare me for adverse conditions.”

You see, the reasons for most crashes are numerous, not one single thing. That last thing that happens before a crash is the “straw that broke the camel’s back,” because most crashes are avoidable.

Here’s another thing to consider before you think that laying a bike down is a viable option: rubber (your tires) will stop or turn you better than plastic or metal (the parts of the bike that will be on the ground after laying it down). Deciding to put the bike down and you have given up all chance of avoiding a crash. In fact, you have just assured that one will happen.

Break the “crash chain” by removing one or more of the “links”; reduce your speed, concentrate harder, anticipate bad driving by others on the road, look farther ahead, etc. Get formal training, and then practice what you learned.

“Shiny side up” isn’t just a cool thing to say; it’s a good plan!