

Safety Tips, by Ben Hochberg, ABATE of Colorado's Rider Education Division

“Head and eyes up!” You hear it all the time where rider training is happening. But why is it so important? There are several reasons.

Our bikes tend to go where we look. Therefore, it's really important to not look at the ground, get it? Or at the guardrail, or at the bridge abutment, or over the cliff, or the rear end of that manure truck – oh sh*t! The general rule is: if you don't want to hit it, don't look at it. Wanna stay up? Look up!

So now we know where not to look. So, where should we look? If you want to make it all the way around the curve (of course you do), LOOK all the way around the curve (or as far as you can see, anyway). If you are going to cross over some type of obstacle (pothole, debris, rain grooves, etc.) look past the obstacle. FOCUS your eyes on where you want to end up, and not on where you don't.

I think we can all agree that motorcycling involves avoiding hazards and bad situations, and that it is better to know about these hazards as far in advance as possible (you do check the weather report before you ride, don't you?). Keeping your head and eyes up at all times lets you see farther ahead, and therefore be aware of what's ahead far in advance of it becoming an issue. This way we can deal with potential hazards gracefully and confidently, rather than having to make sudden emergency maneuvers, which often involve mixed results.

If you see a potential a potential hazard up ahead, decide what to do about as soon as you can. Execute your plan, and as you continue to approach the hazard, continue to focus your eyes far ahead and avoid fixating on the original hazard. This way you can deal with the NEXT situation (you just know there will be one, don't you?). What we are after here are *no unpleasant surprises*.

Head-and-eyes-up helps with balance, too. It's part of “good riding posture,” which not only helps with balance, but with comfort and control.

There is another benefit to head-and-eyes-up: you get to see the scenery! (But don't stare at it too long...)

Watch the pros, like racers, motor officers, or riding instructors. They never look down; they are looking FAR AHEAD when they ride. If you don't already do this, try it on your next ride. You're gonna love what it does for your skill and confidence levels! Enjoy!