

Safety Tips #17
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The Benefits of Training

Have you ever heard the slogan, “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance!”? Nowhere is this more true than in an activity with inherent risks, risks which involve your physical well-being, like motorcycling. Yes, this article is a shameless plug for rider education classes.

When I first started riding, I wanted to take a class in order to learn how to be at less risk. But I could find no classes available. This was in the mid-1970’s, in New York City. So I did what many of us have done: tried to learn on my own. I guess I did “OK”, because I survived big city traffic. Years later I found out that classes had become available, and I thought I would like to teach them. A pre-requisite for taking the teaching course was to take the basic rider course. I didn’t really want to have to do that, as I had already ridden many miles over many years, in many environments and conditions, and I considered myself pretty accomplished and knowledgeable. After taking the basic course, I found out how wrong I was! In fact, I thought I was pretty darned lucky to have survived all those years and miles without having had the training! I learned how to properly turn a motorcycle, stop it, and how to swerve. I learned that most problems related to riding are related riding posture and where the rider is looking; I learned to keep my head and eyes up. After taking the teachers’ course I became even more convinced that motorcycle rider education is a very good thing.

Nowadays there are many types of rider training available. There are courses for the beginning rider, of course, and there are courses

for more experienced riders. There are classes for older riders returning to motorcycling after a long hiatus. There are courses in high-performance riding, sport bike techniques and track riding/racing, trike and sidecar riding, dirt biking, you name it – it already exists or will become available soon.

For the most part, these classes are far from tedious – they are very enjoyable. Many of them enable a person to get their motorcycle endorsement on their driver's license without further testing by the DMV. Most insurance companies allow a discount on motorcycle insurance after successful completion of the course(s). But the best part is that the rider will be at less risk. If you have ever crashed on a bike you know that crashing is a bad deal! Most people would do nearly anything to avoid a crash, and rightfully so! The relatively low price of a training course is easily worth it when compared to the physical and financial pain and suffering which comes with a crash, not to mention higher insurance rates. Let's face it – a bad crash could end your riding career, or worse. Many people think that if you can afford a bike, you can afford training. Makes sense to me...

A final word: the beneficial effects of training do not last forever. Refreshers are a good idea. If you took a course years ago, consider taking another course now, perhaps a course for more experienced riders, done on your own bike. Like I said, it's fun, as well as being the right thing to do.