



Short Safety Subject

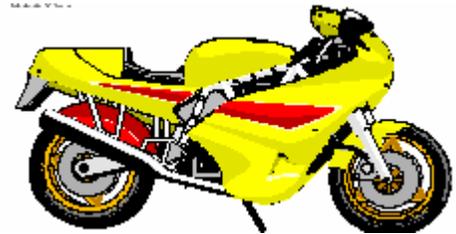
Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Motorcycle Safety Awareness

It's that time of year! Testosterone levels rise and normally sane people start mumbling things like "more power" and "I've got the need, the need for speed." They appear to lose track of their surroundings whenever they hear a motorcycle. Girlfriends, wives, boyfriends, husbands, kids, friends keep finding them drooling outside the plate glass window of the bike shops.

There are also those folks who "caught the fever" in earlier years. They start spending more time in the garage, clearing off dust and cobwebs, dreaming of going for a long, winding ride on their two-wheeler.



Friends and family make every attempt to bring the afflicted around to their senses. They say things like, "Have you got a death wish?" Or "Aren't you a little old for those things?" Or "Wouldn't you rather jump out of a perfectly good airplane?" But their words fall on deaf ears (or bounce off helmets). Although you may never change their minds, there are a few things you can do to increase their chances of survival on the street.

First, increase your own awareness of motorcycles. Spend just one week looking for every two-wheeled kamikaze you can see in traffic. You'll be surprised how many nuts there are out there. It's kind of like when you bought your last car. You never realized how many other people owned the same make, year, and color until you actually bought yours!

Second, find a way to give them a copy of this article - put it on the fridge, tape it to their helmet, stuff it inside their gloves, whatever it takes.

Here's the part for them:

You're a novice. - Like it or not, if you just started riding, got a different bike, or haven't ridden since last year, you're a novice! The first six months are extremely dangerous. Want to improve your odds? Military members must complete a Rider Course before they can register their motorcycles on base.

Your bike needs TLC. - Although mechanical problems only account for 2% of mishaps, they account for the majority of the time spent sitting on the side of the road. Make sure to check brakes, cables, tires (wear and air), lights, mirrors, and the impressive horn.

Looks are everything. - Not only should motorcyclists look *good* when they ride, but also the clothing should be functional. Helmet and eye protection (face shield, or goggles if the bike has a windshield) are a must. Long pants, long sleeved shirts, over the ankle shoes or boots, and gloves will protect you from sun/wind burn, suicidal bugs and rocks, plus reduce the area requiring skin grafts if you forgot the rubber side goes down.

Sky, ground, sky, ground, sky, ground. - Before this becomes the narration of your next trip (pun intended), give some thought to your helmet. Helmets should, at minimum, meet DOT standards, fit snugly, have a strong strap with a two-ring fastener, and be free of defects or cracks. The helmet that saved you during your last accident did it's job - retire it and get a new one. The old one won't work a second time.

Riding on the rocks. - Alcohol and bikes just don't mix. Operating a motorcycle is seven times more complicated than driving a stick shift car. Riding after drinking reduces reaction time and impairs judgment. And people are already questioning your judgment!

Know when to zig and when to zag. - What do you do if you get into a turn too hot? Can you control a skid? Can you still get home if your clutch cable breaks? How do you get the most braking power? How do you get through a slick spot safely? What are the laws in this state concerning motorcycles? If you can't answer these questions with confidence, it's time to take a rider course.