

SAFETY TIPS FOR MOTORCYCLISTS



Why don't car drivers always see motorcyclists?

When cars and motorcycles crash, car drivers often say they didn't see the motorcyclist. Understanding some of the reasons for how this can happen may help motorcyclists to stay safe, and may also alert car drivers to the need to change the way they look for motorcycles.

SOME OF THE REASONS CAR DRIVERS MAY NOT SEE A MOTORCYCLE...

- The size of a motorcycle makes it harder to detect, particularly in complex visual situations such as heavy traffic or intersections.
- Because there are fewer motorcycles on the road, car drivers don't always 'expect' them, and therefore may not scan for them effectively. This is one of the reasons that car drivers can sometimes appear to look straight at you, yet still not 'see' you.
- Some motorcyclists ride in ways that are unpredictable for car drivers. For example:
 - passing on the left hand side or between traffic;
 - approaching faster than expected;
 - riding within a car's blind spot;
 - weaving through traffic.
- Because cars cannot physically manoeuvre or accelerate through traffic the way a motorcycle can, drivers often do not expect a motorcycle to be within impact distance of their vehicle when they make their manoeuvre.
- Environmental factors such as glare, rain, darkness, or objects obscuring a driver's view such as vegetation, parked vehicles, or signage may also reduce a motorist's chance of seeing you.
- Unfortunately there will always be a proportion of car drivers that are impaired. This may be due to alcohol, legal or illegal drugs, fatigue, emotional distress, eyesight or other physical problems, or distractions such as mobile phones or passengers. Impairment or distractions are another reason motorists may not see motorcyclists.

HOW CAN MOTORCYCLISTS IMPROVE THEIR CHANCES OF BEING SEEN?

- Ride in a predictable way. Sudden changes in acceleration or lane positioning make it more difficult for drivers to see you.
- Try to avoid the 'blind spots' of other vehicles – if you cannot see the driver's face in their mirrors then you are probably in a 'blind spot'.
- When riding at night try to make sure that your headlight or tail light does not line up with the vehicle in front or behind you as this can make it difficult for other motorists to distinguish you from the car in front or behind you.
- Many manufacturers now hardwire the headlights on, however if your motorcycle is not hardwired, there is some evidence to show that riding with your headlights on at all times increases your visibility.
- Although lighter coloured helmets and protective clothing are more visible than darker, any coloured protective clothing is better than none. The most common injuries sustained by motorcyclists and their pillion are to the arms, legs, hands and feet. Many of these injuries could be prevented, or reduced in severity, by proper protective clothing.
- Finally, conduct regular visual scans of your environment whilst you are riding, try to position yourself safely on the road, and keep in mind all the reasons a car driver might not see you