

KEEPING IT UP

Where did it go wrong?

Some riders have experienced the split second just before the crash or the near fall, in some cases knowing that they are in trouble and desperately trying to find a way out. In some cases they don't, some get away with it and stop on the side of the road with a very high heart rate.

I thought we could have a few scenarios on why certain crashes occur and analyse the possible alternatives riders could apply to help reduce the chances of crashing on the road.

We have all heard a motorcyclist say the seven words "THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD HAVE DONE". Well, maybe there was. We believe it is a rare case. In most crashes the rider has usually run out of TIME and SPACE.

To enable us to stop safely in a given situation, we should always be trying to travel in the correct Position, correct Speed and correct Gear at all times. This is a basic safe riding principal and just so happens is true for the track as well. Remember a motorcycle traveling at 60 km/h on a flat, dry surface with a competent rider in control should be capable of being stopped (braking distance) in about 12 metres (less for more experienced riders). It is important to consider the time before the brakes are applied, i.e. the Reaction time from the moment the rider sees the need for braking action and the time taken to start braking. This time is anything from half a second to a more realistic time on the Public Streets of about 1 to 1.5 seconds. Consider a situation where a rider is traveling at 60 km/h and is suddenly confronted with a real hazard. If the rider reacts in say 1 second he will travel about 17 metres before the brakes are applied. If the rider's reaction time is say 2 seconds it would be about 34 metres before applying the brakes. Add to that the distance to pull the motorcycle up to a stop, say 12 metres - total distance of about 29 metres or 63 metres would be required.

In many cases the riders fail to anticipate and concentrate enough. This combined with another vehicle invading their space, it is then that the riders over-react and lock their brakes or fail to apply correct steering input to avoid the hazard. If you are thinking and scanning well ahead you will reduce the number of times that you will need to suddenly change direction or brake heavily on the road. In a lot of cases the riders get into trouble, sometimes before they OVERUSE their brakes.

I've been approached by a few riders who have been involved in motorcycle crashes on the roads, being really keen to see that they don't do it a second time, they have asked me to help them analyse WHERE they could have gone wrong. Learning from their experience may help them keep it all together.

The need for concentration cannot be stressed enough.

CRASH I - WATCHING MY FRIEND

The rider said he was riding along in the country with his friend, travelling at about 80 km/h. As he entered a slight right hand corner he looked in his mirror to see where his friend was. As he looked back he found that he was running off the road onto the gravel shoulder. He applied the front brake, the wheel locked and he parted company with his motorcycle over a two metre embankment.

WHY?

Firstly we should only check our mirrors whilst travelling in a straight line. Try just moving your eyes, not your whole head. Scanning using your eyes onto the mirrors every 3 - 5 seconds, especially in built up areas. When you're not looking through a corner it is really easy to run wide. As the rider realised he was running wide he over-reacted and locked the front brake. After visiting the site it was found that he would have had enough room to ride around on the shoulder using his brakes on the verge of lock-up.

