

KEEPING IT UP: A life depends on it

You are trained and competent at both CPR and First Aid and you come upon a scene that obviously requires you to perform one or both of these services. What is the **FIRST** thing that you should do?

Discussion this topic with friends and fellow motorcyclists left me very uncomfortable and very concerned. The reason for this is that I heard suggestions that ranged from "Start CPR immediately" to "Make sure the victim can breathe." I, on the other hand, suggested that the very first thing that should be done is to call 082 911 or a local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provider.

Needless to say some found fault with that suggestion.

I understand the desire of goodwill in the matter; I think it is important to think this through a little more carefully.

Recall that the premise is that it's obvious that either CPR or First Aid services are required. In other words, you arrive on a scene in which there is obvious major trauma to someone. Let's say that you discover that the person's heart is not beating. Traditional thinking has it that you must start CPR immediately! The logic is that failure to do so could very well allow the victim to die needlessly - oxygenated blood is not getting to the victim's brain!

Without trained EMS help along with transportation and other life-supporting facilities to help you, the odds are overwhelming that the victim will die anyway! Maybe five minutes later, maybe five hours later, but it will almost certainly happen.

It is a fact that most trauma cases require multiple and **SIMULTANEOUS** EMS efforts. While you administer CPR you cannot also be stopping the loss of blood from a severed leg! If you are alone and not near a telephone, you have no alternative but to try to help the victim while waiting for someone else to show up who can summon help for you (assuming you decide to provide CPR at all.)

But if you are close to a telephone then it is my opinion that the very first thing you should do is call a local EMS. This will cost a brief delay in starting the victim's aid, but it increases the odds that the victim will ultimately survive substantially!

Consider this: You stop your bike to see if you can help; you pulled out of the way of traffic and probably put the kickstand down as well! That cost very little time, but helped insure that you would not become another victim of accident. That would obviously not help the first victim.

So, even before a one minute phone call to 082 911 you need to be sure that the scene is secure! Be sure it poses no immediate danger to you or others. **THEN**, make your call.

A one minute phone call to get a trained and equipped EMS unit out to the scene costs one minute. If you spend ten minutes doing CPR before someone calls EMS, that costs the victim **TEN MINUTES** of pure oxygen, pain killers, whole blood, and transportation to a hospital!

If there are more than one of you at the scene, the **FIRST** thing you should do, in my opinion, is insure that someone places a EMS call. No ifs, ands, or buts. If it turns out that EMS is not actually needed, you can always call them back and cancel the request. But you can never recover lost time for a major trauma victim. You are, after all, trying to save his/her life - you are trying to buy time. Why give time away unnecessarily?

There is a significant exception to the above: if the victim is a child whose heart has stopped beating or who has stopped breathing, then the child's chance of survival increases if you begin immediate life support - but this is a tough call.

