



Risk Management Services

ROAD SAFETY WITH MOTORCYCLES

Introduction

Motorcycles pose unique challenges to other vehicles on the road. They are not as visible, they have much shorter stopping distances, and they do not maneuver like the cars, vans, trucks, and buses that may also be on the road. Also, motorcycle operators are exposed and more vulnerable in a collision. This makes it incumbent upon drivers of cars, vans, trucks, and buses to be aware of motorcycles and to practice effective defensive driving techniques as they share the road with motorcyclists.

Motorcycle Exposures

There are more than 8.4 million motorcycles registered in the United States. In 2017, 5,172 motorcyclists were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Per vehicle miles traveled in 2016, motorcyclist fatalities occurred nearly 28 times more frequently than passenger car occupant fatalities in traffic crashes (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA]).

Failure to Recognize

- The failure of motorists to detect motorcycles is the most frequent cause of accidents for motorcyclists. More than one half of multi-vehicle motorcycle accidents occur because the driver simply "didn't see the motorcyclist" (NHTSA)
- Motorcycles are small, evasive, and hard to see. Motorists tend to look for other cars, not for motorcyclists
- Estimating their distance and oncoming speed is also more difficult. A motorcyclist's riding pattern differs from a motorist's driving pattern and is harder to judge and predict

Left Turns and Intersections

More than 40% of all fatal motorcycle accidents between cars and motorcycles occur at an intersection when the automobile driver is making a left turn in front of a motorcycle (NHTSA).

Other common incidents include:

- When making the left turn on a four-lane road, the car in the closest oncoming lane stops but the motorcycle in the oncoming far curb lane decides to run the yellow light
- An oncoming driver rear ends or bumps into a motorcycle at the approach or start up at the intersection
- The motorcyclist doesn't read the traffic signal or vehicle's brake light and runs into the back end of a vehicle



Blind Spots

Motorcyclists riding alongside a lane of cars are often out of a driver's view. An unsuspecting driver may sideswipe a motorcyclist as the driver tries to change lanes. Also, a large vehicle, such as a van or truck, can block a motorcycle from other drivers' view. The motorcyclist may seem to suddenly appear from nowhere.

Safe Strategies for Drivers

Motorists must respect the rights of others on the road, including motorcyclists. Do your part by being a safe and courteous driver.

- Increase following distance: Motorcycles can stop much quicker than cars and large vehicles. Always maintain at least a four second cushion between you and the motorcycle ahead of you. During inclement weather, increase the following distance to five or six seconds. Remember, the slightest contact can mean a spill and/or injury for the rider
- Allow for cushion of safety: As you approach, slow down. Allow FOUR feet of passing space between the right side of your vehicle and a motorcycle, just as you would with a slow-moving vehicle
- Give motorcycles adequate space to maneuver. Recognize situations and obstacles that may cause a motorcyclist to brake or swerve quickly, such as potholes, debris, and drain grates
- Don't be distracted. Concentrate on driving and never use a cell phone or text message while driving. Regularly remind yourself to be on the lookout for motorcyclists
- Anticipate the unexpected. Always scan ahead and be aware of your surroundings. Check your mirrors every three to five seconds
- Be mindful at intersections. Pay attention and slow down as you approach, always signaling your intentions and checking twice before you enter an intersection

ROAD SAFETY WITH MOTORCYCLES - *continued*

Additional Resources

[For Car Drivers](#)

This website provided by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation gives advice on how to be cautious when driving around motorcycles

[Driving Safely Near Motorcycles](#)

Think**PHLY** | 800.873.4552 | **PHLY.com**

Philadelphia Insurance Companies is the marketing name for the insurance company subsidiaries of the Philadelphia Consolidated Holding Corp., a Member of the Tokio Marine Group. Coverage(s) described may not be available in all states and are subject to Underwriting and certain coverage(s) may be provided by a surplus lines insurer. Surplus lines insurers do not generally participate in state guaranty funds and insureds are therefore not protected by such funds. | © 2018 Philadelphia Consolidating Holding Corp., All Rights Reserved.

