

I was reading an article in the May 2006 Rider Education Newsletter submitted by Chapter F MA. titled The Most Deadly Dozen Myths. It is about myths, urban legends and misconceptions about motorcycle safety. The problem is belief in these myths can increase your chance of having an accident and being hurt as a result of the needless crash.

MYTH # 1 – OTHER DRIVERS DON'T CARE ABOUT MOTORCYCLIST

Most drivers don't want to hit a biker. Most close calls as well as accidents happen because didn't see the bike or didn't know they were there even though they were right in front of them. There are a lot of reasons for this. You could be in their blind spot, other vehicles blocking their view, distractions such as talking on the cell phone, reading the newspaper, putting on makeup and so on. SCOTOMAS which defined medically as a condition which the brain does not register what the eyes are seeing, is another reason for drivers not seeing a bike. How many bikers involved in an accident have said they looked right at me but the driver says they never saw them? Yep that's why. Best defense? Ride to be seen. Bright colors, use high beams during daylight and above all always assume no one can see you.

MYTH # 2- LOUD PIPES SAVE LIVES

Maybe if you're beside a driver with his window down will hear you before he changes lanes. Noise focused rearward won't do much good in the most common and dangerous situation where a car turns in front of you. Maybe it's fatigue from the noise or attitudes of bikers with loud pipes. Perhaps the loud noise annoys drivers making them aggressive. Whatever the reason, research shows bikes with modified exhaust systems are more frequently involved in crashes than bikes with stock pipes.

MYTH # 3- MOTORCYCLE HELMETS BREAK NECKS

It would seem logical you put more weight out on the end of your neck and when you get thrown off the bike that extra weight will create more pendulum force on your neck. Turns out it doesn't work that way. In fact the energy absorbing qualities of a DOT helmet will also absorb the same energy that breaks necks. Studies show helmeted riders suffer a lot fewer neck injuries in a crash compared to riders without a helmet.

MYTH # 4- HELMETS BLOCK YOUR ABILITY TO HEAR AND SEE DANGER

The thing you learn when you dig into research is that bike riders who wear helmets crash less frequently than riders that don't wear helmets. Maybe people who choose to wear a helmet have a better or more realistic attitude about riding. Maybe using a helmet reminds us of the dangers involved in our sport. Maybe being protected from the wind, noise and elements causes less fatigue. Whatever the reasons wearing a helmet reduces the likely hood of a crash.

MYTH # 5- A HELMET WON'T HELP IN MOST CRASHES

People look at the seemingly low impact speeds used in motorcycle helmet testing and assume if you're faster than that the helmet is not up to the job. Consider these facts.* Most accidents happen at relatively low speeds * Most of the impact energy is vertical(the distance your head falls until it hits) * DOT rated helmets perform spectacular life saving feats at speeds far above the test speeds. Ask anyone who races on the track both 2 wheels and 4 wheels. A rider with fatal head injuries from a crash probably had other fatal injuries as well. The numbers still say riders with helmets have a much higher survival rate over riders without a helmet.

**MYTH # 6- A HELMET WILL LEAVE YOU BRAIN DAMAGED IN A CRASH
WHEN YOU SIMPLY WOULD HAVE DIED**

It's a possible but rare occurrence. If you hit something that hard in a crash chances are very high you would receive other fatal injuries. The facts show it is the rider without a helmet is more likely to cross from the animal kingdom to the vegetable kingdom and often from a relatively minor impact that would leave a rider with a helmet with nothing more than a bruised ego.

This is part 1 of 2 parts. Part 2 will be in the March Newsletter

RIDE SAFE
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