

From: "Walt Overlander" <Ldwalt@tampabay.rr.com>
To: "Joe & Jan Mazza" <jmazza4465@earthlink.net>
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Subject: "BLIND SPOTS" Newsletter Article

BLIND SPOTS

Riding a motorcycle is a dangerous thing to do. Just ask your doctor or other medical professional. The problem is that they only see the aftermath of accidents. They don't consider the fact that good riders use prevention strategies to keep them out of the traps that many riders get into.

Paying attention is the most important trait for any motorcyclist to have. Complacency can get you into a lot of trouble. For instance, if you have been traveling the same road for a long time and your speed has slowly crept up along with your comfort level, you may be setting yourself up for a rough time.

Traps and blind spots can hide things, and do change with traffic conditions as well as with changes in signs, lights, and landscape. Trees can fill out and obscure a side road. Large vehicles parked near a driveway or an intersection can hide vehicles emerging from those hard to see spots.

Speaking of large vehicles, what of those 18-wheelers and their blind spots. Your small motorcycle is hard to see in the mirrors of the truck. So you must make yourself conspicuous or put some distance between your bike and the truck. The blind spots around large vehicles are called the "no zone" and could also be named the danger zone. The entire right side of an 18-wheeler is a danger zone. Don't ride beside it. If you must remain behind it make yourself known. Get where you can see the driver's face in his mirror. When an 18-wheeler passes you, be courteous and flip him a flash of bright lights when the truck gets far enough ahead to clear you and pull back into your lane. Drivers will usually acknowledge that with a blink of their rear lights as a thank you.

When trying to pass another vehicle on a two-lane road, there can be many hazards. Blind spots are everywhere. The road ahead can dip out of sight, hidden side roads can yield emerging vehicles just as you are passing, and to make matters worse, the vehicle you are passing may change speed or direction without warning. When passing on a two-lane road, always pay careful attention to the landscape and try to determine if there could be a side road anywhere ahead in the area where you will make the pass.

It is better to drop back a short distance and move to the left when getting ready to pass any large vehicle, so that you have a better view of what is coming. That also gives you a little more time to react if the roadway itself yields a surprise, such as a pothole or a slippery substance. Dropping back a couple of seconds makes you easier to see by oncoming vehicles and may just prevent that oncoming vehicle from swerving right into you to turn of pass.

It is critically important to drop back a ways from any large vehicle while going through intersections. Opposing drivers who don't see you and are waiting to make a turn may see the gap behind the vehicle you are following as a large enough gap in traffic to turn left across your lane.

Pay attention. Your awareness level is the most important thing you have in your arsenal of safety devices. Blind spots are everywhere. Look for them aggressively.

Walt Overlander