

The Safety Corner

Street Strategies

By Paul Holko

This Safety Corner will explain **Street Strategies** and help you to:

- Understand techniques for being seen and seeing others in traffic.
 - Understand proper positioning for space cushioning, lane protection, and following distance.
 - Understand the **SPA** process for dealing with hazards.
- Be prepared to practice street riding using these strategies.



The Harry Hurt study concluded that “ 7. The failure of motorists to detect and recognize motorcycles in traffic is the predominating cause of motorcycle accidents. The driver of the other vehicle involved in collisions with the motorcycle did not see the motorcycle before the collision, or did not see the motorcycle until too late to avoid the collision.”

Being Seen and Seeing Others.

Clothing; Select bright clothing, light colored helmet and retro-reflective material

Headlight; Ride with the headlight on **HIGH** beam in the daytime. Consider a headlight modulator/pulsator to increase visibility.

Signals; Combine hand with electric signals whenever possible. Show your intentions.

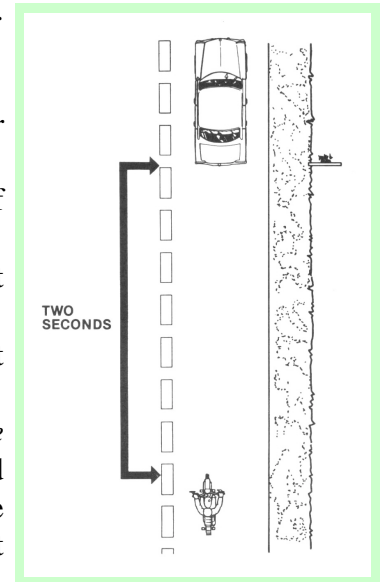
Lights; Flash the brake light before and during stops to increase conspicuity. (Like that word).

Seeing others.

Scanning; Scan **12** seconds ahead; *your immediate attention is required for anything 4 seconds in front of you.* Search everywhere!

Positioning - Communicates your presence & intentions. Increases your line of sight. Allows time to react.

- **Space cushion;** Create space between traffic to front, back and sides. Adjust constantly.
- **Lane placement;** Increase visibility. Avoid other motorist's blind spots. Best position is determined by road & traffic conditions.
- **Following distance;** Maintain a minimum **2 second** following distance. *Here is how to calculate 2 seconds.* As the vehicle in front of you passes a fixed object, start counting, *one thousand one, one thousand two.* If you come to the fixed object before you finish counting, you are too close to the vehicle in front of you.



ALWAYS MAINTAIN A MINIMUM 2 SECOND DISTANCE.

SPA - THE RIDERS CREED. This *most important technique* should be learned and practiced by *every rider and co-rider, any time, in or on any vehicle.*

S - Scan/Search. Look everywhere. Do not let your gaze fix on any object more than a *fraction* of a second. Identify anything that interferes with the riders path of travel, cars, trucks and other moving vehicles. Pedestrians & animals which move quickly & unpredictably. Holes, guard rails, uneven and/or different colored pavement, bridges, trees, stationary objects. Intersections, driveways, merge ramps.

P - Predict. Is the hazard stationary, moving away or toward you? What might the hazard do? Where might a collision occur? How might the hazard or effort to avoid it affect you and others? Decide what you need to do; what is your best course of action.

A - Act. Three basic actions are available to the rider.

1. **Communicate** - Use your lights and horns to communicate your presence.
2. **Adjust speed** - Use your throttle, shift, or both brakes. Use **maximum** braking for a quick stop. Accelerate to create space. Downshift for a quicker response.
3. **Adjust position** - Change lane position, change lanes, or change directions. In areas of high risk, be prepared to take action by covering both brakes and clutch and selecting potential escape routes.

The Harry Hurt study concluded that “ 9. *The most frequent accident configuration is the motorcycle proceeding straight then the automobile makes a left turn in front of the oncoming motorcycle.* 10. *Intersections are the most likely place for the motorcycle accident, with other vehicles violating the motorcycle right-of-way, and violating traffic controls.*”

In other words, most motorcycles are involved in frontal collisions.

Using **S P A**, let's take a *hypothetical* situation.

You are approaching a normal intersection with light traffic, two lane road with *left* turn lane, you have the green light, speed 35 mph.

S

Scan for potential hazards. No traffic to right, you are well behind the car in front of you . (2 second gap). Identify a hazard. Car facing you in **left** turn lane, has signal on.

P

Predict what might happen. Driver may not see you and may turn left in front of me. **Decide what to do.**

- Separate & minimize the hazard.
- Communicate to the driver, make sure he sees you.
- Adjust your space and time, move to the center of the roadway to create space cushion from the **left** turning car.

A

Act. Execute your decision. Use your **throttle** or **brakes** to adjust your speed if necessary, steer to adjust your lane position to the center of the lane, **cover both brakes & clutch**, blow your horn and/or flash your lights to get his attention.

“*Yeah, and I'll probably make him mad, blowing the horn.*” **So what?** If you feel he doesn't see you, what is the **worst** of the alternatives; an automobile driver that is “*teed off*”, or an automobile driver that has just made you a **statistic!**

Remember, it doesn't matter that you have the right-of-way, you are completely right. If you are involved in an accident, **you** and **your co-rider** are the ones that will suffer the most.

This is another of the many techniques taught in the MSF Experienced Rider Course (ERC) available to all members. This Safety Corner bulletin is not a substitute for the ERC. The situation outlined does NOT ensure you have learned the proper techniques. Only by taking an ERC, with proper coaching by a MSF trained instructor, can you be ensured you have been presented with the proper riding skills to make you a safer rider. I urge every member to enroll in one of the available ERC courses as soon as possible.

