Washington Motorcycle Safety Program

Volume 3, Issue 1
Winter 2016

The Ride Report

A Newsletter for WMSP Instructors

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Coming Up:

Advisory Board

- March 29 – Seattle
- June 23 -- Wenatchee

2016 WMSP Spring Updates

6-9pm

- March 9 – Olympia
- March 22 – Kirkland
- March 31 – Spokane
- April 13 – Burlington
- April 21 – Wenatchee

2016 2-Wheel IP - Richland

- May 13-15
- May 20-22
- June 3-5
- June 10-12

3-Wheel IP

- TBA

Welcome to the Winter Ride Report!

Happy New Year! We hope you had a relaxing holiday season, and have had a chance to reflect on all the lives you have touched in the classroom and out on the range.

We also hope that you can take some time to reflect on your journey for the year ahead. Where are you going as an instructor this year? Where are you going to take your students? How can you contribute to their safety – as well as yours?

We hope you enjoy this issue of The Ride Report.

This issue contains some excellent articles submitted by Mischa Erdman (ESC) and Kyle McCarty (PSS), as well as contributions from your WMSP tech staff. Here's hoping that we hope will spur some reflection – from the journey behind, and ahead.

Where will your road take you this year?

Making a Difference

A man was walking along the beach one hot day. It was low tide, and hundreds of starfish were stranded on the sand.

The man then noticed a small child picking up one of the many starfish and return it to the water. As he watched, the child picked another, and another, and returned them to the sea.

The man walked up to the child and said, "Don't waste your time, child, there are *hundreds* of starfish stuck here. You can't help all of them – you're efforts won't make any difference."

The child returned the starfish in his hand to the sea and said to the man, "I just made a difference to that one."

So many riders need to make better choices - how can you help them all? The instructor looks at the students and said, "I just helped that one."

-DW

Why We Do It

The sun beat down on the asphalt, shade-less parking lot, while they again mounted up, started up, and waited do something they had never done before. Students in a Basic Rider Course.

So who takes motorcycle safety classes? Let's look at some students (of course names have been changed) from a former class of mine and find out.

We'll begin with Berndt. We begin with him because he would be the first one you would see, being about 8 feet tall. From Germany and studying at the U of W, he tells me he has never ridden before. But when I see him ride I don't believe him. At all. At the end of each lap of an exercise he would ask, with a grin so wide I could see it inside his full face helmet, "that vas good, ja?"

Roland. Large guy. Tiny scooter. Filled with mirth, Roland would respond to complements about his riding with things like "wow, guess I must be sobering up!" Why learn to ride - to commute on the ferry to his job as an educator. Hopefully sober most of the time. Large guy Roland can stop that tiny scooter on a dime in about 5 feet! Skills.

Ready on Catapult One! Hank, an older, retired Naval Aviator and now a "motorhome pilot", wants to learn the art of riding because apparently landing combat aircraft on the pitching deck of an aircraft carrier wasn't quite challenging enough. It is also hard to carry an A-4 Skyhawk on the rear bumper of your RV. His biggest worry about riding – getting distracted in Florida by "women in bikinis." Guess we all have our crosses to bear.

Is there a Doctor in the house? Why yes, yes there is. Julie, is a physician who no doubt is completely familiar with the tragic and gruesome results of motorcycle crashes – but still wants to ride for commuting and fun. She wants a dual sport, as she "wants her fun to include running over stuff." She has never ridden before. She ends up with the highest grade in the class. Bam!

"I have wanted to ride motorbikes for a long time, and my wife is out of town right now", says Ragu - mild mannered software Engineer by day, Steve McQueen by night.

Mark of Mercer Island. Perhaps The Nicest and Most Polite Man on the Face of the Planet. After every coaching tip he would give– a heart-felt "thank you so much". Why does Mark want to ride? "To have FUN!" Nailed the U-Turn on the skills test.

Linda, works in the motorcycle industry, and wants to learn to ride to up her street cred. She also knows more about helmets than anyone (including, obviously, Gary Busey).

These folks started out with learning where the controls for a motorcycle are located and practicing their Barry White impressions with their smooth use of "squueeeeeeeeze" and "eeeaaazzzee" to rock the bikes back and forth with the engines off. By the end of two days they were corning and shifting at the same time, doing emergency stops (the best STOPPING class I've ever had), weaving and swerving, and picking bugs from their grinning teeth. I am so proud of them and their work. And so glad I could be a small part of the beginning of their two-wheeled journey.

That vas good, ja ?

-DW

ALT of the Day

Practiced Reaction

To help students explore the role of learned reaction in riding, try this. Ask them to cross their arms in front of them (doesn't matter right-over-left or left-over-right). Then ask them to re-cross their arms the opposite way. Now, have them cross their arms again. Most will cross them the original way without thinking about it. What conversations could *you* spark using this ALT?

Condition Yellow

The following article was submitted by Mischa Erdman. Mischa recently completed the IP in Everett WA and is currently an instructor for Evergreen Safety Council.

Even though I'm new to the Rider Coach profession, I'm not new to the world of motorcycles. I have an analytical mind so when an incident occurs I ask the question WHY? I may not have the answer right away but it gnaws on me until I find a reasonable answer or explanation as to why and what can be done to minimize future incidents. The Handbook by the MSF acknowledges that learning a motor skill is an inherently risky activity and that there may be instances when a participant loses control of their motorcycle but it doesn't explain why.

Sometimes the answer or explanation is found in the most unlikely place which in this case I found in an industry that isn't related to motorcycles. I once read a book "On Combat" by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman. I remembered reading something about the effects of Fear (Heightened Anxiety) Induced Heart Rate Increase and how it affects our Physiological Arousal and Performance, which prompted me to re-read the book. My findings are noted in this writing.

I recently attended the instructor meeting at ESC and the topic of "range and exercise issues" was addressed, in particular Exercise #10, not only because an incident happened on my watch, but it's also an exercise that most students find challenging.

1. It was suggested - to stop a student during a range exercise for coaching or equipment check 20 feet outside the path of travel….In my case my student was stopped where students would normally stop and wait to enter the box…..a crash would not have been avoided.

2. It was suggested - to inform our students that Exercise #10 is a "warm up exercise" for the start of day two. So are we to tell our students that the objective to maneuver in limited spaces doesn't need to be met…..you know, using the newly trained and unrefined motor skills of clutch and throttle control plus rear brake use in combination with the counterbalance technique which until now has not been introduced (weaving between offset cones and perimeter turns don't qualify), then to do it in a figure eight within a box…..That we're only warming up! By the way, why a figure eight? 99.9 percent of all U-turns are done to the left. Why not do two lefts? Is the figure eight done just because it set us up to exit the box for the S-turn?

3. It was also suggested - not to tell the students that the exercise is hard or difficult, let them decide for themselves…..The Duke of Wellington said "No man fears to do that which he knows he does well". I believe the students already bring a certain level of anxiety with them to the range and we add to that anxiety when it's made clear to them that each exercise builds on new skills, knowledge and confidence acquired in previous exercises and that if they are unable to consistently achieve "exercise objectives", we the instructor will need to counsel them out of the course (with no refund). Dropping a motorcycle is also frowned upon and wet surface conditions don't minimize anxiety either. I try to have my students relaxed, excited and eager to do an exercise. The difficulty of an exercise is never mentioned. It's left over to the student to determine what they find challenging. The challenge could start as early as Exercise #2, anywhere in between, or as late as the skills evaluation. But during an exercise or at a debrief, praise is given when warranted and a suggestion is given or a question is asked to them on what they could work on.

I believe the effect anxiety has on our motor skills and what can realistically be done about it deserves a closer look. I gleaned the following information from the book "On Combat" third edition. My focus is on Fear (heightened anxiety) Induced Heart Rate Increase and the effect it has on our "Physiological Arousal and Performance" and on our "Perceptual Distortions". I also bring to light a simple yet effective procedure that is used to lower this Fear Induced Heart Rate Increase.

Condition Yellow (cont.)

On page 30 the book mentions Conditions White, Yellow and Red. "Condition White" between 60 – 80 bpm is our normal resting heart rate. "Condition Yellow" between 80 – 115 bpm is ideal to perform well on a motorcycle. Then there is a zone that exists, generally between 115 and 145 bpm which is called "Condition Red". In condition red we start to pay a price because at around 115 bpm our fine motor skills begin to deteriorate. An example of this is when being stopped for a traffic violation or when we're involved in a traffic accident and find we have difficulty signing our name or scrawling down our telephone number. It goes on to say that such a symptom is a result of early stages of vasoconstriction, a condition that restricts the flow of blood to our extremities. At 145 bpm our complex motor skills deteriorate.

Interesting though, on page 35 the book mentions "Condition Grey" between 145 and 175 bpm. It says that if we have practiced the required skills extensively, we can push the envelope of condition red, enabling extraordinary performance at accelerated heart rate levels. An example of this, where the rider generally maintains a heart rate of around 175 bpm for hours on end, is the Isle of Man, MotoGP and the like. To perform at expert level in condition grey you have to rehears, train and turn each action into "muscle memory" also referred to as "autopilot". Ron Avery calls this process "stress acclimatization".

On page 43 it talks about "Condition Black" above 175 bpm. This is when the midbrain "hijacks" the forebrain and we function on animalistic instincts (fight or flight). The example is given of having an argument or a discussion with a truly frightened or angry person. It just can't be done! The more frightened and angry the person is, the less rational he is. This is because his forebrain (which performs basic thought processes) has shut down and his midbrain is in control. At this level not only are our fine motor skills and our complex motor skills lost, our cognitive processing deteriorates, we have loss of peripheral vision (tunnel vision / target fixation), loss of depth perception (closer than it really is), loss of near vision (trouble seeing closely) and auditory exclusion (diminished hearing).

My student definitely reached "Condition Black". They entered the box for the 3rd time, and even though they were doing well in previous exercises they lost control of their motorcycle. What went wrong? What spooked them? The U-turn to the right appeared to be challenging for them, is that what caused their anxiety to escalate? Was there a decrease in confidence with each entry into the box? Were they being too hard on themselves? Were they overthinking the process from where they were stopped to where they needed to go? Did the basic operations, that were starting to become automatic, now prove to be challenging?…..squeeze in the clutch, press down to first gear, look where you want to go, full lock handlebars, lean bike over slightly, counterweight, ease out the clutch while releasing the front brake, quarter roll on the throttle, and go. Something in the process spooked them and they went from condition yellow to black in seconds.

So how do we keep ourselves in "Condition Yellow"? It's by using a simple yet effective technique of Tactical Breathing. The book explains it in detail starting on page 328 but for our purpose I'll just explain the technique as it's written in the book. It's a four count method. Begin by breathing through your nose to a slow count of four, which expands your belly like a balloon. Hold for a count of four, and then slowly exhale through your lips for a count of four, as your belly collapses like a balloon with its air released. Hold empty for a count of four and then repeat the process. That's it! Here is the guided Tactical Breathing procedure…..In through the nose two, three, four. Hold two, three, four. Out through the lips two, three, four. Hold two, three, four….. Repeat as needed.

To conclude, I believe that we should inform our students of the heightened anxiety levels that they may start to experience and the effect that it has on their motor skills. Heightened anxiety could happen to them during the written test, during exercises on the range or during the skills evaluation. We should then arm them with the Tactical Breathing technique. If it works in combat, it will work for us!

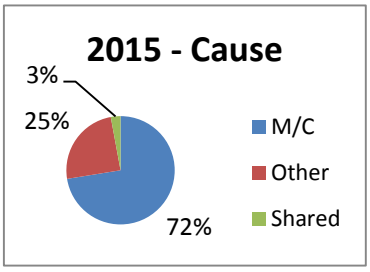
STUDENTS TRAINED 2015:

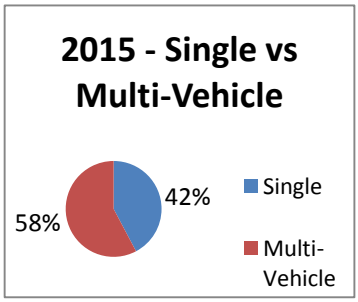
15,057

2015 Fatalities:

71

As of Dec 2015





Need Some Additional Resources?

If so check out our instructor resource page on the DOL website!

http://www.dol.wa.gov/business/motorcycle/instructor-resources.html

Third Tech Joins WMSP

After a highly competitive hiring process, we would like you to join us in welcoming Eric Shields to the WMSP team!

Eric has been a 2W instructor with Evergreen Safety Council as well as a Harley Davidson Rider Academy instructor.

Eric brings a wide variety of experience from outside the riding community as well. He has worked for both large and small organizations, facilitated conferences, workshops, and trainings, and worked in community relations and outreach.

Eric's first day with the program will be Jan 4th.

What Do You Think the Stats are Saying?

1. What percentage of the tested fatalities in 2015 had alcohol in their system at the time of the fatality?

a. 5% b. 13%

c. 28% d. 40%

2. How many fatalities involved either the motorcycle getting rear-ended or the motorcycle running into the back of another vehicle?

a. 7 b. 15

c. 3 d. 10

3. How many of the fatalities were a result of failure to negotiate a curve?

a. 32 b. 17

c. 11 d. 23

4. What time of the day has the highest number of fatalities?

a. 12:00am – 2:00am b. 2:00pm – 4:00pm

c. 8:00pm – 10:00pm d. both b and c

5. What county has the highest number of fatalities?

a. Pierce b. Snohomish

c. King d. Skagit

How did you do?

Did anything surprise you?

How could you use the stats in your class?

Would you use the stats in your class? Why or Why not?

You can find the answers at the bottom of this page!

1-c, 2-A, 3-D, 4-D, 5-c

ATGATT Anyone?

As you consider the coming year, what will you do to help keep yourself safe on the range? The following was submitted by Kyle McCarty, MSF Chief Instructor, and currently an instructor with PSS.

ATGATT: All The Gear, All The Time.

But, for who? Students? Other riders? Me? You?

As we know, ATGATT is an ideology and attitude that all motorcycle safety gear should be worn at all times no matter what speed or perceived risk level. For a lot of folks, it isn't just a phrase; it is a mindset.

As riders/instructors, we consciously choose our gear. Of course our choice is based on protection, comfort, visibility, convenience, and sometimes image/ego.

So, why this article? On 09/29/15, I unfortunately had a mindset of "Nothing will happen to me!" Because of this mindset, I experienced and event that I'd like to share. I hope to inspire you to consider ATGATT in a different way.

It was a wonderful warm sunny day teaching a three-wheel class of very engaged students. My YEARS of teaching without any type of demo-ride challenge, slip, or crash, enabled me to be complacent knowing, "NOTHING will (ever) happen to me!" Yes, I had let my ego/pride and image jade my gear choice.

It was during one of my favorite demos, skidding to a stop, that the front tire of the rig suddenly jerked left and grabbed an incredible amount of traction. In the last few feet of the demo the rig instantly flipped. I don't remember much except hearing a series of sickly crunching and snapping sounds. Not of metal when a bike hits pavement. Instead it was my bones as the rig landed on me!

For some reason, instead of doing a demo again in 3/4 open face style, I had lowered my modular helmet into full-face position just before starting. (Lucky as rig parts slammed against the back of the helmet driving my "chin" into the pavement.) My protective Aerostich was sitting in the air conditioned classroom staying cool. Sadly, my long sleeve t-shirt, gloves, and over-ankle footwear was ALL the protection I had.

My CHOICE on-range gear was totally useless. My not wearing any protective armored jacket, no chest/back protector, no shoulder armor… this allowed my collar bone to be broken into 4 pieces, my scapula to be split, seven ribs broken in 3, 4, and 5 pieces, and my lung to be perforated.

My false sense of security is similar to a complacency that can be acquired when someone rides the same roads to/from work... without any issues... day after day. This false sense of safety can hinder a rider from being fully aware and taking the unexpected into account.

I really don't remember when I gave up wearing lots of protective gear (beyond minimum curricula required) for demos. For some reason I came to believe, "Nothing will happen to me!" Yet, laying in the hospital with a bunch of new stitches, a groovy new titanium plate and matching screws, a chest tube, and a breathing exerciser thingy... I had lots of time to reflect.

One reflection was "safety". I realized that range rules and standards were not put in place for the 99% -riders who never crash or even have close calls. Instead, the range rules, run-off standards, maximum students per range, and path-of-travel safety margins were put in place for the 1% -who need it most.

It's the 1% (that I now speak as a part of) can benefit most from watching an instructor gear-up. Yes, even for a demo. When gear is demonstrated by Instructors, it sends a powerful message.

It is only NOW that I've realized that I have been doing a disservice to my students. (Preaching one thing; yet demonstrating another.) Karma rode in on the 29th. I rolled snake-eyes. I lost the risk bet and crashed -hard!

So what does all this mean? Simply that I invite you to consider what Instructors wear to/from class and during demos.

ATTGAT Anyone? (cont)

I invite Instructors to encourage and inspire critical thinking skills about ATGATT.

How can this be done? Asking these types of questions:

- How does ATGATT support a safer ride by offering protection, comfort, and visibility?
- What are some consequences of not wearing gear?

For me, I unexpectedly and quickly became the 1%...

- What experiences support an ATGATT strategy? (Perhaps scuba diving, firefighting, law enforcement, skydiving, etc.)

For me, I was not wearing appropriate/effective protective gear. (After all, it was only a demo!)

For me, I now ask my students:

- If you knew that during your next ride you were going to crash, would your choice of gear be any different than what you typically ride in?
- If you knew that your life-partner, daughter/son, mom, or best friend were going to crash during their next ride, what gear would you encourage them to wear?

MY solution is ATGATT. Yes every ride. Yes every demo. I will always DRESS FOR SUCCESS both on-range and on-street!