



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of STATE MOTORCYCLE SAFETY ADMINISTRATORS

SMSA Spotlight Magazine

Spring 2017

Motorcycle Safety Instructors Also Need to be Traffic Safety Professionals

Motorcycles are part of the traffic mix. Riding a motorcycle is a much more complex task than driving any other vehicle in the traffic mix, so Motorcycle Safety is a part of the larger Traffic Safety system. Most of us also drive passenger cars, some commercial vehicles, so we need to know what's going on in that arena. We also need to be good Traffic Safety role models, whether we're behind the handlebars or behind the wheel. As safety professionals, we need to be aware of problems on our nation's roadways – impaired drivers, distracted drivers, inexperienced drivers, etc. We need to read the latest from NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration), from the National Safety Council, from the AAA (American Automobile Association), etc. If there is an article in USA Today on Traffic Safety, for example, we need to read it and share it with our colleagues. When NHTSA and states come out with national and state statistics, we need to do the same. If we manage Motorcycle Safety Instructors, we need to share any Traffic Safety information we have with them.

Because we are one of the most vulnerable roadway users, along with pedestrians and bicyclists, we are most critically affected by careless driving habits – impaired driving, poor decision-making, distracted driving, talking on cell phones while driving, etc. It stands to reason we should be prepared, then, to model the behavior we, as motorcyclists, would like to see in

other drivers. Motorcyclists may be more accomplished car drivers than the average non-motorcycling car driver because of their experience with a more complex task like motorcycling. However, we are still affected adversely by our own distractions. The cell phone issue is an interesting one. Years ago, in approximately 2006, the Military banned the use of cell phones while driving unless they were hands-free. As safety professionals, we shared with them that the hands weren't the problem; the head was the problem. When a person is engaged in a conversation with another person, especially if the other person is not in front of them, that conversation and mental processing of it takes precedence over the driving task. Interestingly, more so than when the person you are talking with is in front of you. Likely because they too can see what's happening in front of your face and will also react to it by ending the conversation. In Drive Cam videos of young drivers, we often see them continuing a cell phone conversation during and after the crash. No matter how skilled a rider and driver we are, we are still adversely affected by talking on our cell phone or performing other distracting tasks while driving. Let's be role models for the rest of the traffic mix on our motorcycles and in our cars. Let's choose to be knowledgeable about all areas of Traffic Safety.

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SMSA Listserv

Please take advantage of the SMSA Listserv hosted by Oregon State University. The SMSA Listserv is an easy and efficient way to contact your fellow SMSA members with questions relating to Motorcycle Safety and Rider Education. To sign up, visit the SMSA website Members Only section and choose the tab for Listserv. Summaries from past postings are also listed under the Listserv tab.

Be Crash Free Offers SMSA Members 20% Discount

New SMSA Member Benefit: 20% off Be Crash Free membership for all SMSA members (use discount code "SMSA2017" at checkout).

Be Crash Free is a voluntary membership organization where our mission is to inspire and empower the motorcycle riders of America to take action and make choices to prevent and survive crashes. Picking up where rider training leaves off, Be Crash Free helps riders to stay on path of making smart riding choices after they graduate class and ride off into the sunset.

www.BeCrashFree.com

It's a great way to show your students your commitment to safety and gives students a concrete direction to go in to answer the question "What's Next?"

To get Be Crash Free handouts or membership discount codes for your students, contact Ax Axmaker at Ax@BeCrashFree.com



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Gear Up for the SMSA 2017 National Training Summit

The 2017 SMSA National Training Summit will be held September 27-30, 2017, in beautiful Burlington, Vermont.



The 2017 National Training Summit will focus on "The Next Generation in Motorcycle Safety."

Session Tracks will include:

Motorcycle Safety / Rider Education and Training

- Innovative programs for motorcycle safety and rider education and research reports

- The role of Law Enforcement in public awareness and rider education
- Public education and outreach – "Reaching the Next Generation"

Rider Education and Training

- Rider education and training in the future
- Instructor recruitment and retention

Instructor Training and Development

- Specific training sessions for instructors, instructor trainers, site coordinators, evaluators, etc. (90 min. classroom or range blocks)

Classroom Training, Workshops and Panel Discussions

- Effective classroom instructor training techniques
- Classroom techniques for "Teaching the Next Generation"

Range Activities (riding and training activities located in the parking lot at the conference center Thursday-Saturday) (90 min. blocks)

- Effective range instructor training techniques
- Techniques for "Teaching the Next Generation"

We look forward to seeing you in Burlington, VT. For more information on the Summit, the hotel and the local area, please visit www.smsa.org.

SMSA 2017 Summit Sponsorships

The SMSA 2017 National Training Summit provides your company with the opportunity to introduce its services, technology and products to leaders in the



motorcycle safety and education industry. There are various ways to sponsor an event at the 2017 SMSA Summit. If you would like to learn more about customizing a sponsorship opportunity, please contact the SMSA Office at 724-801-8075 or by email at office@smsa.org.



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A Testament to the Value of Training

As one of the newer instructors in Total Control's talented arsenal of personnel, I've been reflecting on a few things recently that I hadn't contemplated before. How long have I really been riding? In that time, what have I accomplished? And finally, how have I given back to the sport that brings me so much joy?



The thing that brought this thought process on was something very simple that I almost missed. At the more advanced levels of Total Control instruction, the instructors give a very brief history of their riding experience, and I had never done that before. I thought originally I had been riding for five years...when it came down to three (3) years. Why? I'll tell you.

I got my first motorcycle at the age of 28, so I was late in the game. I believe this may have worked in my favor in some ways. Also, I was raised around motorcycles because my dad was your typical "All American Biker." Big, loud and scary was what I knew motorcycles were. However, none of this taught me how to ride. Throughout my childhood I had always craved a motorcycle. I wanted the speed, thrill, excitement and adventure that I knew a bike would give me but alas, I could never afford one and didn't have the know-how that my dad did to build my own. So years went by and things happened. I went to college, I joined the Marine Corps and FINALLY! After the birth of my son in late 2010 and coming home from deployment, I did it. I took my tax return and in April, 2011 I got myself a Harley Sportster 883. This thing was sweet! It was custom, lowered and looked a little like a café racer.

Being a Marine I was required to take the MSF's Basic Rider Course in order to operate a motorcycle on the roads. I did and passed with flying colors. This stuff was easy! After that I was free to navigate the not so perilous roads of South Carolina on two wheels. And I did, having no clue I was an accident waiting to happen. About a year went by, and I rode every chance I got, more worried about how cool I looked on my bike than how well I knew how to ride it. Eventually, through a sad turn of events I was forced to sell the Harley to raise funds rather quickly. I found a buyer and had him meet me at the training range to be sure

he knew what he was doing. He handed me the money order and off he went on the range. Ten minutes later, he guaranteed the sale of the bike by crashing it right in front of me. Such is life.

Now, this period of time I do not count in my riding years. I didn't know what I was doing, and I never even tried to actually improve my skills. I just magically discovered things on my own, like a lot of people do. Fast forward to July 2012, I was now living in the capital of motorcycle riding in America, Southern California! I came into some quick cash, and I was thirsty for two wheels again. So, I found a MINT 2010 Yamaha R1, pearl white and sounding like an angry mistress. I'm not sure how in the world I got it home safely. This thing was completely different from my Harley and ridiculously fast! I was immediately riding every day. I found groups that rode the canyons regularly, and I was hooked; the Valentino Rossi of the public roads. Several close calls and heart attacks later, an acquaintance offered to take me to a track day for free. He got me everything I needed and picked me up. This was October 11th, 2012. Mind you, only three months had passed since I got back into riding, and I was twisting throttle on a 150hp beast that weighed less than 500lbs. By lunch, I had already dragged both knees and wore a hole in my boot. I was good at this! I was faster than the guy that brought me! I had no clue what I was doing, but I didn't know that; I just thought I was good.

I was hooked on the track so badly that I went out once and sometimes twice a month after that. March of 2013 I was in my very first race and took second place! During this time I became the Vice President of my battalion motorcycle club and also became a mentor. I was starting to take this stuff seriously and starting to figure out that riders need help. I took the California Superbike School's special mentorship course on base and learned that I was not nearly as good as I thought I was. I figured the answer was this: I sold my R1, and bought an old GSXR 600 race bike and gave up the streets for a year. I got my official race license and thought I was doing things right. The streets were just too dangerous, right? I spent the next year beating my head off the wall trying to figure out why I was not improving my lap times. They improved a little, but I was way off the podium pace for the races that I entered.

For a little while after that, I tried different things that didn't work, but the important part was that I now knew something was wrong with my riding. I was offered a unique opportunity to work at the motorcycle

safety office on Camp Pendleton where I took all levels of Total Control instruction and enjoyed the progress so much I decided to become an instructor. Now, taking the course is one thing, but becoming an instructor is another entirely different thing. Your riding ability and technique is scrutinized to a level that you can barely comprehend and countless revolutions of the same exercise become mind numbing and tiring. I had finally found the Holy Grail, the boot camp of riding!

If I had not been given the chance to be exposed to the training in such a unique way, I probably would have never been able to progress as much as I did. It may sound like I'm bragging, but I'm really not. There are several challenges ahead of me because of getting my certifications in such a short period of time. The bar has been set high, and I have to perform accordingly. But again, because of this I will become an even better rider not just physically, but mentally as well.

Every now and then, I get students that have been riding for 35 or 40 years, and I am amazed at how difficult it is for them to catch on to the techniques on the training range. I mean, come on, I've been riding for a few years, and it's easy! Well, that's a testament to the value of training. I think of my father, who hasn't ridden in years since he had to sell his beloved Harley and I imagine that it's him out there when I get those guys or girls that may be difficult students because they can't pick up the exercise as easily as they thought they should. Doing this keeps me from getting frustrated because I realize how important riding is to them and how little training they've actually had. They don't realize the folly of their ways because they haven't had the unique opportunity that I have.

On the other end of the age spectrum is a good friend of mine that is barely over 21. He's been involved in motorcycle instruction for 3 years, and he's a better rider than probably 98% of the people I've ridden with in my time on two wheels. He has his limitations like we all do, but when it comes to his demonstrations for classes they are flawless. Now he's been working on getting faster at the racetrack, and by the time he gets comfortable with higher speeds and the challenges that they introduce, he will be one of the very few well rounded riders that I look up to. Plus, he will spend way less time fumbling around a racetrack like a lost puppy than I did which means less time and money wasted.

So, what am I really trying to say here? Go get trained.

Take the training seriously. It will certainly save your life. No matter how "stupid" you may think a class is there is real value to it. I have never taken a class where I didn't learn or improve at least ONE thing, and who knows, that one thing could have saved my life at some point. Now, I look forward to my next training course which will most likely be in the dirt and then, who knows? I'll never stop training.

In closing, I must tell you all who are reading this that after you get training GO PRACTICE! You don't get nearly enough time on the training range to make the exercises become muscle memory. You need to practice over, and over, and over and OVER again. Take video of yourself, or have a knowledgeable friend there to watch and critique you on whatever you're doing. Think of the training as picking up a set of tools. In order for those tools to save your life when the time comes, they need to be used frequently. Instead of using them on the street frequently, find a parking lot and get some cones. Set up the new tools that you were given and practice.

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Honda Press Release **Honda Expands Safety Training** **Reimbursements**

New plan expands the number of eligible agencies that can provide training

TORRANCE, Calif. (Feb 1, 2017)

Honda offers purchasers of new motorcycles, scooters, SxS and ATV vehicles incentives to complete hands-on safety training. Any state approved motorcycle safety program that meets NHTSA standards will now receive this benefit. Additionally, to help customers who want to improve their riding skills, Honda will be expanding their loaner program to cover these new programs.

"Safety training is very important to Honda," said Gary Martini, Manager of Rider Education at American Honda. "We want our customers to enjoy our products for years to come and getting the proper training is the key."

For a complete list and description of courses offered and information on how to enroll go to powersports.honda.com/experience/colton.aspx.

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Summer 2017 Spotlight Edition

If you would like to have an article featured in upcoming editions, please submit it to the SMSA office. Articles can be about your state safety campaigns, state programs or anything motorcycle related. Advertisements for Supporting Members: please submit any new advertisements that can be featured in the Spotlight as well as the 2017 Summit Agenda.

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