

Red Knight Skills Day

Back at the beginning of the 2010 riding season, Red Knights—Massachusetts Chapter 2 held a “Skills Day” to afford the members an opportunity in an off-street location to practice skills together and to discuss several important safety topics.

Courtesy of Phoenix Park in Shirley, Mass. a classroom and one of their corporate parking lots were made available to the club for their use on a Saturday in May.

Members met first in the meeting room and discussed basic topics of riding safety and viewed several videos. Topics included basic riding skills, co-rider skills, and safe group riding.

Upon adjournment to the “drill yard” the first order of business were “T-Clock” inspections. Information was available on the details to be looked at during a pre-ride inspection and the importance of routine inspection of our motorcycles. The drill yard inspections also included use of a sound meter to see if each bike was in compliance with Massachusetts noise emission standards.

The drill yard was divided into several stations so that all members could be participating in various tasks throughout the day.

Co-riders, as well as the operating partners were part of the day’s planning and exercises. A station was set for the co-riders to practice the emergency procedures recommended in the event that the motorcycle’s operator becomes incapacitated. This is not something we wish to think of, but we



have all heard of instances where a rider can no longer control the motorcycle — whether from suffering a medical emergency or some other action, like being struck by a passing deer or falling tree.

Another related station was for the rider to become the passenger. When was the last time you as a rider were on the back of a motorcycle? Being the co-rider requires skill and a lot of TRUST in your rider. Each member was afforded the opportunity to ride on the back of another rider’s bike as the passenger. It’s a big change!

The remainder of the stations were for practical skills maneuvering. Figure-eights, off-set cone

weaves, and emergency stopping practice are all skills that we need to become and remain competent in as safe riders. We know from our firefighter skills that “perfect practice makes perfect,” so periodic practice helps hone those skills on the bike.

Setting up a course is easily done with “halved” tennis balls. You can purchase small traffic cones, but the tennis balls can easily be obtained from local tennis clubs and then cut in half. They are visible and pliable, and will give under the tire of the bike and not cause the rider any distress.

Another station during the maneuvering course was the “board” test. A recent article about motorcycle licensing in Japan, that appeared in Motorcycle Consumer News, told that one of the drills that must be accomplished to obtain a motorcycle license in Japan is to ride along an eight inch wide board for fifty feet.

Instead of a board, the dimensions were set up using the standard “halved tennis balls.” You may think that driving a straight line is an easy task — but it is more difficult to control than you think!

Being an industrial complex there were tractor trailer boxes in the area. Another station was set up to allow the rider to approach the TT units from the rear. More tennis balls were used by the cab of the units and if you got close enough to the rear of the unit that you could not see the tennis balls, it meant you were too close for the driver to see you.

By positioning yourself differently you learned how to adjust your approach to the unit so as to stay out of the driver’s blind spots.

Of course food (pizza and ice cream) was involved in the day’s activities. What was said by all those involved is that it was well worth the time spent to hone up on the skills needed to keep us safer on the road.

What is important to remember is that even and old codger can learn (or re-learn) skills that make him (or her) a better rider.

