

Welcome to the Jungle – The Art of Learning to Ride Skillfully

A column dedicated to your riding survival

Who's your Group's safety officer?

Robert Laford

Each time your local emergency services departments roll out the door they initiate the Incident Command System. "ICS" helps emergency responders to safely manage their personnel and resources. The "Incident Commander" develops the goals, strategies, and an action plan to handle the situation that they are faced with in their response.

One very important function within the "ICS" structure is the Safety Officer. A safety officer acts as the Incident Commander's eyes and ears looking for potential and probable hazards that could adversely effect the operations and personnel. As riders we can take lessons learned in emergencies to heart and better lead and manage our riding time and our riding safety.

The formal roles and responsibilities of an emergency service's Safety Officer include:

- Responsibility for monitoring and assessing hazardous and unsafe situations and developing measures to assure personnel safety.
- Correcting unsafe acts or conditions.
- Maintaining awareness of active and developing situations.
- Ensuring that a Site Safety and Health Plan is prepared and implemented.
- Including safety messages in each Incident Action Plan.

Those basic bullets for an emergency scene Safety Officer are easily transferable to help promote the safety of us as riders. These concepts are valuable to us before, during and after our ride.

- The Ride Safety Officer will monitor, assess, and advise on unsafe situations and promote personal safety.

Safety should always be a shared responsibility between all riders. The tasks and duties that come out of a Safety Officer role can be instituted in an informal atmosphere of riding just as easily and just as effectively as within an organized group ride.

- The Ride Safety Officer will correct unsafe acts or conditions. The safety of the group and its riders are paramount.

Although a Safety Officer should not be the "Safety Police," ensuring that everyone is prepared properly for a safe ride is important to all the riders, not just the individual that is the focus of the attention. The concept of rider safety and promoting ride safety is a priority but the improved level of safety may be best achieved through coaching and education rather than an aggressive approach to what is perceived as right or wrong.

- The Ride Safety Officer maintains awareness of active and developing situations.

We know that conditions and our response to what we encounter on a ride can change in a heartbeat. All riders should be keenly aware of their surroundings and the situation at hand. The Ride Safety Officer becomes someone who helps us all achieve that additional perception of situational awareness in our ride.

- The Ride Safety Officer ensures the safety plan is implemented and includes information in the ride briefing.

Before the Ride. Safe rides begin well before the ride, and a safety role within us as individuals or as part of a group ride begins with planning. Before the bike is even rolled outside; am I prepared to ride? Am I prepared physically, mentally, and emotionally? Are my thoughts and my mind focused on the ride ahead, or is my mental focus elsewhere with other aspects of life. Those concerns and stressors with family, work, or other life challenges may melt away once the ride has begun, but they may also take attention away from the concentration and focus needed for a safe ride. What weather, road condition, or traffic issues are probabilities on the ride? How can I prepare myself and my fellow riders for the potential issues of the day's ride?

Am I prepared physically? Am I overtired, hungry, or fighting a cold? Have I taken over-the-counter or prescription medicine that may reduce my reaction and riding abilities? Will my condition, whether my mental focus or my physical ability, take away from the ride for me or others?

What about my bike? When was the last time the air pressure was checked?

CONCOURS 14

The Kawasaki Concours® 14 has rewritten the rules for modern sport tourers, blending strong yet refined sportbike performance with touring-class technology and comfort to make transcontinental trips a true delight.

**NO MATTER WHAT YOUR PASSION,
WE'LL GIVE YOU "PRO" TREATMENT.**



Is the bike in good physical shape to provide a safe and enjoyable ride? Have I taken the time recently for a thorough T-Clock exam? How about my riding partners? What kind of condition are their bikes in for the ride? A quick survey around the parking lot prior to the riders' briefing may find a hidden danger that has gone unnoticed. It may be that someone notices a nail in a tire, or that the tread depth is dangerously worn on a bike. If you noticed that someone planning to ride with you had a potential problem with their ride – that could turn into a hazard for them and for you – would you make mention of it?

That conversation between riders may end the ride for the day, but it could also keep you on the road for another day by avoiding a serious mishap.

Whether you are riding with two bikes or twenty bikes, hold a riders' meeting. Where are we headed? What are the day's plans for stops, for gas, for personal comfort? What sized gas tanks are on the ride and how many miles does each rider feel comfortable with between stops? Who has communication? What hand signals will be in use? What if we get divided up?

Any preplanning done helps increase the comfort level of the ride because it reduces the uncertainties. And what if you are riding solo today? Preplanning is also important for you before the trip. Pilots file a flight plan and riders should do the same. Leave information behind about what your plans are, where you are headed, and your expected return. This helps those sitting back at home waiting in case you are delayed. They will have an idea what to expect and may be able to lend a hand if your planning goes awry.

During the Ride. During the ride the safety role continues. Each of us must always be cognizant of how the situation changes, and how changes in the riders, their motorcycles, the road and traffic conditions, and the weather all contribute to changes in the safety of the ride. The Ride Safety Officer helps in reviewing and sharing insight to what may be changing for the ride and how that may affect the plans for the day. The plan that was originally discussed at the ride briefing may have to be altered as conditions change to keep the ride as safe as possible.

After the Ride. After the ride is through the safety component of the ride is not completely over. Were there events that arose that were unexpected? Did a situation emerge that was dealt with effectively or could have been handled better? What lessons learned from the day's events can be used to improve your skills as an

individual, or is it information that would be valuable to share with others as well? This type of debriefing may not necessarily be a formalized meeting, but it could be a discussion among a few riders – or it may be a discussion with the voice in your own head after the ride. And post-ride follow-up should also include your bike. Are there any maintenance or service issues that need to be addressed before the next ride?

Do you have a "club" newsletter? Use resources like books and magazines, reputable on-line information, and "lessons learned" from past experiences to share information with others.

It does not matter if you are on that solo ride around town by yourself, a pick-up ride with a few buddies, or that organized planned ride with a club; let the Safety Officer in you come out. It may be that little voice in your head that is double checking your T-Clock inspection, or it may be that formal ride briefing before the group leaves. Having a sense of safety for yourself and the group is important to share. That collective knowledge available from all those riding offers the opportunity to re-

view with ourselves and others the points that improve the "safety factor" each and every time we set out on the motorcycle. Take the time to develop your "inner safety officer" and improve the safety of your rides by sharing that information with others.



CEDAR RAPIDS
RIVER FRONT DINING
 BAR - RESTAURANT - CAMPING - BOATING
 845-557-8711 • CEDARRAPIDSNY.COM
 RT 97 BARRYVILLE, NY

TAKE A RIDE ON ONE OF THE NORTHEAST'S
 SCENIC BYWAYS - ROUTE 97 - 20 MILES NORTH
 OF PORT JERVIS. DINE WITH YOUR FELLOW
 RIDERS ON THE DELAWARE RIVER
 ENJOY OUR EXPANDED CANOPIED DECKS
 OPEN 7 DAYS FOR LUNCH AND DINNER

SEE YOU THERE!

OUR NEW HOSTS DAN & FAWN SCHNEIDER

INVITE YOU TO SAMPLE OUR
 HOME COOKIN' 7 DAYS A WEEK
 AT THE WORLD FAMOUS
 CEDAR RAPIDS

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT
 OUR WEBSITE FOR WEEKLY
 SPECIALS & EVENTS

WWW.CEDARRAPIDSNY.COM

