

## Attorney Tip Law Tigers

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## Do You Drive Your Motorcycle Defensively? (Some Basic Tips to Reduce Your Chances of Getting into a Motorcycle Accident)

When riding a motorcycle, one can never really be too careful. Although it is usually impossible to directly alter the behavior of those motorists with whom you must share the

road, as a motorcycle rider, there are some basic precautions you can take to reduce your chances of becoming a motorcycle accident statistic.

The following strategies serve as just several examples of defensive motorcycle driving:

1) When approaching a signal light or other controlled intersection, visually scan (180 degrees) your environment. Look out for the oncoming and intersecting traffic as well as the approaching light signals. It is also helpful to monitor the pedestrian walk and wait signal. If the pedestrian signal is white, you'll likely still have a green light and be able to continue through the intersection. On the other hand, if you see that the pedestrian signal is flashing red, the odds of having to stop at the upcoming intersection are much greater. Rather than accelerating to avoid the red light and the intersecting traffic, slow down, proceed with caution, and stop at the intersection.

2) Find out about the weather forecast. How cold or warm will it be? Air temperature can affect your motorcycle's performance and reliability, as well as your ability to respond to unforeseen danger. Is there a chance of rain? Rain alters both automobile and motorcycle handling characteristics, including such things as braking distance and turning radius. Heavy rain can also significantly reduce driver visibility. In addition, water and oils can seep out of road tar to produce a slick road surface, which can lead to vehicles hydroplaning. How windy is it supposed to be? Wind can alter your motorcycle's handling characteristics and stir up road debris. For that reason, always check for shrubbery or trees along the road side-Should you experience a sudden gust of wind that propels debris, you'll be better prepared to avoid it.

3) When initiating turns, keep your head and eyes up, looking through the turn as far as you can. If you are in the habit of looking down at the pavement when turning, it will cause you to make wider turns than necessary. This error is responsible for over 40% of motorcycle fatalities.

4) Whenever you are riding, keep a minimum 2 second following distance from the vehicle ahead of you. The ideal following distance is 3-4 seconds. When riding with a group of motorcyclists, make sure that everyone is riding in a staggered formation. That way, if whomever is in front of you brakes rapidly, you'll have enough time to slow down and avoid a rear end collision.

5) Avoid the temptation to weave in and out of traffic-Your average commute time will be reduced by only a few seconds. Moreover, weaving motorcyclists are more likely to be invisible to individuals who drive cars and trucks. Although in certain states it is legal to "cut lanes", the dangers often outweigh the benefits. Due to their difficulty seeing motorcycles or their inattentiveness, automobile operators will often cut off riders. As a result, weaving through traffic significantly increases your chances of become an accident victim. In particular, quickly changing from one lane to the next on your motorcycle confuses other motorists. More significantly, it can make it more difficult for drivers to spot you from behind or off to the side.

These safety tips are by no means comprehensive. There are countless motorcycle safety books, magazines, and rider courses available. Whether you are a long-time rider or a just a beginner, proper in depth training is critical. Equally as important is your willingness to apply what you learn and always drive defensively. As motorcyclists, we can never be too safe, nor can we be too careful. As always, ride free and ride safe. **See**

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