

The Bubble of Awareness



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You've seen them on the roads driving their cars, trucks, and SUVs. Talking on the phone, eating, making a grocery list, checking their Palm Pilot, reading their GPS, yelling at the kids, and maybe all of the above! How much of their attention is left for driving? I call this their 'Bubble of Awareness' – how large is the area that they are aware of and paying attention to? Maybe just to their front bumper...

Now, how about us? How big is OUR Bubble of Awareness? We have distractions, too. Two-way radios, keeping an eye on the other riders in the group behind us, the argument we just had with the boss/spouse/friend/etc., the distracting effects of heat, cold, wind, bugs, debris, etc. How much of OUR attention is being spent on the business of riding?

Research has shown that in an emergency situation, we have between 2 and 3 seconds to react before something bad happens. The problem is that it takes about 3 seconds to judge, decide what to do, and then take that action. Now, I'm not a math whiz, but that seems like a problem to me...

What makes the difference is what happens during the 5-10 seconds BEFORE the emergency situation. If we can train our Bubble of Awareness to extend to 20 seconds ahead of where we are now, we can start to make some predictions and take actions that reduce our risk:

- *Truck with uncovered load* – predict debris – back off and be ready to slow/swerve/stop
- *Driver up ahead going slowly and looking side to side* – predict they are looking for an address and may turn suddenly – back off and don't pass (they may turn left when you are trying to pass!)
- *Road curves out of sight* – predict that beyond the bend is debris, a stalled car, deer, and/or a tighter turn – slow and select a lane position that allows you to see farthest around the turn

There are dozens and maybe hundreds more. The trick is for us to get our eyes up and look well ahead. Identify those potential hazards, make predictions, and take action early. The best way to handle an emergency situation is to identify it and take action BEFORE it becomes an emergency.

Enjoy the summer riding – be alert, ride within your limits, and increase your Bubble of Awareness.

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