



The Straight and Narrow

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Risk Assessment and Group Riding



As most of you Chapter Members know, I am employed with General Dynamics in Garland. The company has a strange way of looking at things, at least to me it is strange. They seem to believe that between their hourly employees, and their Department Managers/Supervisors, that production and product will pretty much take care of itself, requiring only slight intervention of the company Hierarchy.

As a company they have a very strong emphasis on Safety and the Environment. We do what is called a "Job Hazard Analysis", which is basically Risk

Assessment, on each job that is performed at our facility. This is done at frequent intervals which usually occur about Quarterly. This will identify hazards that could affect the employees and the environment and give us a chance to correct the situation.

So, what does this have to do with riding motorcycles and Safety? Whether you realize it or not, we as riders are constantly doing Risk Assessment every time we ride our bikes. We are constantly surveying road conditions, obstacles, traffic, other group members, etc. to determine if there is a risk that we need to address and make concessions for. The fact that when riding in a group, we have 20 eyes looking for these risks is a great help in identifying more risks than we could possibly see on our own. After all there is only so much that we as individuals can observe and process at one time. It is very important that we all do our part to help keep the group safe. We have said many times before that the Ride Leader and Tailgunner are responsible for managing the ride, but this does not mean that we as part of the group can not add our warnings as needed. Often times an obstacle will not present itself to the group until after the leader has passed it, or the leader may be distracted at the time the obstacle presents itself. Give your leader or tailgunner the opportunity to call the warning first, then act if you feel it is warranted.

With this in mind it is important that each member of the group is aware of the proper way to indicate a hazard to his fellow riders. There have been instances that someone has called out an obstacle, and by the time that you decipher what they are saying it is too late to react. We should refrain from using terms to identify and obstacle that are not familiar to the rest of the group, or let them know before hand what we are talking about. Sometimes it is better to indicate only the location of the hazard rather than waste the time trying to identify it. This can be done by simply saying "Right/Center/or Left Track". By doing this, at least the rest of the group will know what area to avoid.

Of course Hand (and Foot) gestures are sometimes the best (and only) way to address obstacles and their location. When doing this, remember to Point at the Obstacle, "With Emphasis". This is much more effective than a meandering wave in the general direction of the item which will leave your fellow riders searching for the obstacle rather than avoiding it.

One last thing that we need to remember is that not all the group members will have the same abilities and comfort levels as you do. Something that will cause you no concern may be of great concern to the rider behind you. So if it looks like it could be an issue, always err on the side of Safety. It is better to be safe than sorry, and you don't want to be a contributing factor to a group member taking a spill.

Till next time, Ride Safe, Watch out for each other, and HAVE FUN!

Dale



Gold Wing Road Riders Association Chapter G2 Greenville, Texas "The Road Runners"

