

Managing Risk

By Jim Roberson

The Merriam Webster online dictionary defines manage as “to handle or direct with a degree of skill” and risk as “someone or something that creates or suggests a hazard”. This definitely applies to motorcycle riding because if you look at our sport, it is clearly a matter of managing risk every time we ride.

I will only give three examples here; there are countless others that could be added, but that would be out of scope for this article. What I would hope that you take away from this article is the idea that everything you do while riding contains to some degree a defined level of risk management and that you should think about the ride and not what you are going to be doing at your destination or what you are going to have for dinner tonight. Those things can be dealt with more appropriately at another time.

You see one of those yellow deer warning signs. You think to yourself; I have ridden through this area hundreds of times and have never seen a deer, therefore the sign must have been put here by mistake. According to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices “the use of warning signs should be kept to a minimum as the unnecessary use of warning signs tends to breed disrespect for all signs.” You have definitely mismanaged risk. According to an article on living with wildlife in Washington, more than half of all deer/vehicle collisions occur in October and November and that deer are most active at dawn and dusk. You should be especially watchful during these times. This does not mean other times are safe; it means that other times there is a lower risk. Manage Risk!

You are riding down the highway and the sky ahead looks threatening. We have all heard the sayings that if you don't like the weather wait a few minutes and it will change. Since weather prediction is at best an inexact science, we must rely on inputs from our senses and the reports from reputable sources in order to manage risk. The question is; do you stop and put on your rain gear or take a chance? This is another fine example of managing risk. A number of factors will help you make your decision such as how much further do I have to go; how familiar am I with this area; is there a safe place for me to pull off if necessary? Again, Manage Risk.

You are riding in the rain on the freeway and are approaching an interchange with large truck fuel stops on both sides of the highway. It is approaching dusk and you see several trucks on the entrance ramp. What do you do? It is not the intent of this article to tell you what to do, but to encourage you to quickly assess the situation and make the best decision that you can to ensure your own safety. In other words, Manage Risk.

Just a few situations, but they do cause you to think about using your skills effectively, that is managing, to avoid a hazardous situation; risk.

Ride Safe!