



# BULLETIN

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## ■ Is it Safe?

by Paolo Volpara OMM 2008

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In the 1976 classic movie *Marathon Man* the Nazi Doctor Christian Szell (Laurence Olivier) chases and tortures Thomas *Babe* Levy (Dustin Hoffman) for information he simply cannot provide. The terrible old man keeps drilling holes into Thomas teeth repeatedly asking, *Is it safe?*

Revisiting recently this sensational thriller, brought me back to the frequent question that, without torturing systems, the fellow riders ask during theory or observed rides: *How can I make my ride safe?* My normal answer is *Keep the bike in the garage and the keys in the bathroom*. You must admit that this drastical system provides an elevated level of safety. When parked and not running the bike is pretty safe: I had several times little kids in my garage, very near (never on top... that is risky) to my Ducati 916 and they felt pretty safe, I felt pretty safe, the mother felt pretty safe and the bike never attacked them.

Safe is an individual perception bringing the few readers of my notes to the fifth sphere of motorcycling; and *perception* is a magic subject because we do not see things as they are. We see them as we are. The question *It is safe?* address deeply the personal instinct and, in this dimension, does not have universal answer. What is perceived safe for me is not necessary perceived safe by you: therefore the question; *How can I make my ride safe?* remains equally without answer. Techniques, systems, tips may make riding saFIER but definitely do not make it safe.

The way you perceive reality is probably the answer to the question and, as such, it requires much more than few hours of observed riding or training. Perception is entirely dependent on how we process or categorize the experience, it depends on the mental *files* we build consciously and, sometime, unconsciously: to these files the mind returns every time it perceives a situation similar or perceived similar) to one met before. And the reaction (brain to body) is always instinctive (if you want like-without-thinking).

This system seems to support the group of bikers who think that instinct is all you need to be good: they forget that instinct is just an educated reaction requiring knowledge, experience and exposure. At the sound of a gun shot my first reaction is to run for cover in any possible direction: a good soldier reacts differently, his instinct is *trained* to take position, evaluate sources and return fire without panicking. Faced with fatigue a biker used to ride on short distance only will loose concentration and place himself at risk: a rider educated to stay on the saddle for long hours will refocus and apply relaxation techniques carrying him aware to destination.

A biker with small experience will feel tense from the beginning of the ride, he will be subject of fatigue early, will be more tense making more mistakes, accumulating more fatigue in a close spiral: instinctive reactions will plug into non-biking behaviors and the biker-with-small- experience will forget to steer, will use brakes badly, will be in wrong position, will not consider



traction..

So, instinct is not so instinctive.

It is foremost an education of perception: learning how to read the perceived situation. Is this a danger? If so, how serious? If serious, how imminent? If imminent, how should I faced it effectively?

Three elements transform an instinctive reaction in an educated instinctive reaction: knowledge, experience and exposure but only self awareness can guide the three.

Unless we know that we do not know, unless we perceived our self as called to excellence we cannot approach knowledge. All that is known about competent riding is lined in front of us but we do not see it: we do not see the need and the use of it. It is the *classical* case of the rider who *knows everything* and cannot accept any suggestion for improvement. His self awareness, when applied to bike, is that riding is not so important, it is a game to be played as it comes along: after all he is already (he perceived himself already) expert.

To access knowledge we need to be aware that we are called to excellence in all we do and that we need to learn at any step of our life. This may make riding safer.

For experience and exposure ride one more mile and see you on the next bulletin.

*It not safe* this is the answer, Doctor Szell

*The absence of fear makes possible the fullness of perception* (Thomas Harris)



## ■ The Essential Survival Skills..?

from MegaRider

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### Emergency Braking

Emergency Braking is an obvious survival skill. In a crash situation one needs to be able to scrub off speed fast to either avoid crashing into something or to reduce the severity of the impact.

A less obvious fact about emergency braking on a motorcycle is that poorly implemented emergency braking can itself cause a crash. In a crash situation in a car, locked wheels simply reduce the extent of speed reduction. On a motorcycle, locking a wheel (and especially the front wheel) is likely to cause the bike to go out of control and the rider to crash.

In the first two years of riding, most riders untrained in emergency braking skills tend to lock the front brake under hard braking and fall off. Whether this crash is serious or not is mainly a matter of luck. This experience will undoubtedly cause the rider to be scared of using the front brake, the most effective brake on the machine, and can make him/her extremely vulnerable in a crash situation.

Research by Harry Hurt of the University of California has established that only a small minority of riders correctly use their brakes in a crash situation. Most use only the back brake (which only provides about 20% of the machine's total stopping power) while about a third apply no brakes at all! It has been suggested this happens because the rider, having fallen off under brakes in the past, is scared of his brakes. Getting riders used to using their brakes in emergency mode is essential to their health and survival. Just getting riders informed about the procedures and factors involved in emergency braking will go a long way to reducing the number of crashes, injuries, and deaths.

### Direction Perspective

The eyes play a major role in the control of a motorcycle. On a motorcycle, where you look is where you go and, to establish your direction perspective, the motorcyclist must use his eyes correctly. The way the rider uses his eyes also plays an important part in anticipating the actions of other vehicles around him and in the messages he sends to other motorists in conflict situations. Target fixation is also part of this. The rider who looks at the roadside furniture s/he is trying to avoid is sure to hit it!

### Maneuver Anticipation

Anticipating what a vehicle is likely to do in a conflict situation involves a number of skills, many of them quite complex. Yet, looking at the most common motorcycle/car crash situations, the NZMSC discovered that there were a small number of anticipatory skills which, when carried out in a specific order, enable the rider to anticipate the likely actions of the driver, the movement, and speed etc of the car. Knowing this skill and implementing it enables the rider to get early warning of the actions of errant motorist and thus avoid impact with the offending vehicle.



### Crash Survival

Sometimes, no matter how good the rider is, he will be invited to join someone else's crash and will be unable to decline the invitation. Where a rider crashes, there is a specific set of actions and reactions the rider can make that will greatly reduce the chances of being seriously hurt in the crash. A simple example is where the bike slides out from under the rider. In this situation the rider should always try to slide rather than tumble. This way he can see where he's going, he can use his hands and feet to steer away from danger, and his body will not tumble with the extremities at risk of snapping as they impact with the ground or parked cars etc.

### Counter Steering

A skill that has only become widely recognized in the last decade, counter steering is the technique of using gyroscopic precession to cause the motorcycle to change direction quickly and accurately. While used subconsciously by all people who ride motorcycles, this skill is little known consciously by most riders. Thus, it cannot be used by these riders as a means of emergency maneuvering in a crash situation. Yet this skill is often essential in a crash situation where a rapid and accurate change of direction means the difference between a near miss and a full impact.

### Risk Management

A modern management tool in big business, risk management is the skill of identifying risks, calculating their severity, deciding whether one wishes to carry that risk and, if one doesn't, how to counter that risk. In the case of the motorcyclist, this is a matter of identifying the risks in riding (for example, the risks of riding fast in a specific location) and deciding whether that risk is one they are willing to take. Most riders, until taught this skill, do not even consider the risks involved in riding in any logical way. Either the risk is considered as a whole (the risk of riding a motorcycle) and, as a whole is too large to make an informed decision upon (and is thus filed in the Too Hard basket of the rider's brain), or is unfocused, in that riding in one particular location at an excessive speed is not considered as a speed pertinent to that location but as the speed "I normally ride at". When given some basic pointers on the ways to use risk management in one's riding, the rider is, for example, more likely to be selective in his speeding and to take a sensible and considered approach to risk.

The advantage of risk management is that it is a process which is perceived by riders to be a professional process and a process that allows the rider to make his own value judgments in its implementation, such as the judgment of the extent of risk the rider is willing to expose himself too. Personal value judgments like these are amenable to change through social and peer pressure and, with the psychological make-up of the motorcyclist, the best safety improvements are achieved if the rider moves to a safer riding style voluntarily rather than through a legislatively-imposed system.



## Getting Lost is Always Good...

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Fantastic little box with detailed info on Turkish road. I am not a fanatic (nor an expert) of GPS system but I received this one Bul Bul with the opening screen personalized with OMM logo. In this way I was obliged to put it to test: it seats comfortably in the tank bag and it works (with my surprise) simply well tracing and reading some of the forest roads around Dalaman. Take a look at the machine at [intery@](mailto:intery@) and you will be surprised by the zillions of things this small packet can do.

## And Couriers too...

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Hakan Erman (OMM and Emok rider) received this summer a request from a Courier Agency in Istanbul to provide basic training for 43 couriers with similar 125cc bikes. Plugging into the OMM – ARA experience Hakan designed a simple program for one day and then went into action: here his report: -We decided to cut the area into two, one for larger group of 25 and the other for 18. We were three trainers and four assistants.

We concentrated on braking, swerving and slow speed on the track. Also we demonstrated relationship between braking distance and speed. As we have planned we had two sessions in the morning, lunch, theory session for three hours and two more drills in the afternoon, on the field.

In general it was quite successful I think.

Not only the attendees but we also learned a lot.

I was surprised to see that most of them lacked basic skills like proper braking and swerving. There was a guy who never used his front brake (survived in the business for 5 years)! Only one in my group knew the relationship between pushing the lever and turning. Tired and suspicious looks in the morning changed quickly into curious and happy looks. We managed to win their hearts and we went for winning their minds, as you had advised. It was the first time they tried to ride better (other than working on wheelies), and they realized that there was a lot to learn. They appreciated our work together and we felt quite satisfied. I then prepared a letter for the company, gave some advices for further and continuous training, a hiring procedure and equipment"

Speaking about *attitude and awareness*. I hope you did not miss the line Not only the attendees but we also learned a lot. It is easy to criticize couriers for lack of competence and safety: more difficult to start doing something about it and learning in the process. In reading the first report Jon Taylor wrote *-I feel you have planted some seeds here that will hopefully take root*. Hakan and his team are a great example of moving the ARA mission one step forward and the small help we provided with suggestions and ideas is fully returned by what we took back from this experience.

## OMM Events Ahead

	Ankara	Bursa	Istanbul	Izmir
20 Sep 08			Ara Road International	
21 Sep 08			Ara Road International	
22 Sep 08			IAM Membership Ride	
23 Sep 08			IAM Membership Ride	
24 Sep 08			IAM Membership Ride	
27 Sep 08		RoadCraft Ride		Ara Road I'ntl
28 Sep 08				Ara Road I'ntl
29 Sep 08	RoadCraft Ride			
04 Oct 08			Ara Control	
11 Oct 08			RoadCraft Ride	
18 Oct 08			Ara Road National	
19 Oct 08			Ara Road National	
22 Oct 08				ARA-Theory
26 Oct 08			I	RoadCraft Ride
29 Oct 08				29 Oct Touring
15 Nov 08			RoadCraft Ride	
30 Nov 08		* * * Opening of CAT 2009 * * *		
13 to 14 Dec 09		* * * OMM Rally for 2009 Plans * * *		

The OMM Calendar and list of activities is presented in [www.ommriders.com](http://www.ommriders.com) and invitations are sent to the ARA Yahoo Group open to everybody who wants to sign up at <http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/AdvancedRidingAcademy>

OMM communities are riding in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Bursa.

