

Rider Education: A continuing Awareness: Group Riding Hazards, Part III

Hey, we can make another 100 miles today!

___Another factor that sets groups up for accidents is fatigue. Riding all day takes a lot of effort and concentration. For most of us, after six or eight hours duking it out with traffic, our skills and reactions are very likely degraded.

Wednesday, May 26, 2004, a group of three seasoned riders leaves the Seattle area for the 49er rally in Auburn, California. The weather has turned cold and wet, which slows them down and requires they press on longer than planned to stay on schedule. The next day is also rainy and cold, and, exhausted from riding in gusty winds, they turn in after only 250 miserable miles. On the third day they awake to blue skies, their attitudes get sunnier, and all three figured that a fast ride to Auburn will get them there on schedule after all. But two hours later one of the bikes spins a bearing in the transmission. Locating a truck to transport the ailing bike puts them another four hours behind schedule, with 250 miles yet to go to their destination. But the two remaining riders urgently want to make the rally on time, and so they press on.

They do make good progress until late that afternoon, and just a few miles short of the rally. Entering a small town, the two riders collide, sending both bikes to the towing yard and both riders to the hospital. As one of the riders relates, "Mistakes were made but the underlying cause was fatigue. We simply pushed too hard and didn't stop often enough. We were all thinking about getting to the rally that evening and were unwilling to say anything to each other about how tired we were."

That business about trying to make the destination on time is a dangerous mindset that many of us share. I've known riders to continue over mountain passes at night in blizzards, to head off across the desert without sufficient water, and to keep going at speed on plugged tires. It's awfully hard to admit defeat and delay the trip, or worse yet to turn back. And I'm speaking from personal experience here. The moral here is not to get the often fatal mistake of the "gotta get there-itis," as it can prove to be more expensive than you are willing to pay.

Additional articles will continue about group riding. (article in Motorcycle Consumer News)

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March 2005