

Target Fixation

Sometimes we riders tend to minimize the risks we hear about. Take, for example, what every student of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation has heard about – “target fixation.” “Fixating” on something means not being able to take your attention (your eyes) away from it. In the case of riding motorcycles, for example, this leads to the phenomena wherein our motorcycles tend to go in the direction we are looking and is usually described with an example familiar to all – that if you see a pothole in the street ahead of you and don’t take your eyes off it you are likely to hit it.

While that is true, it is too trivial an example to get our attention appropriately. We are left with the opinion that ‘target fixation’ is of trivial concern because we all know that we can, if we try, avoid the pothole.

We talk at great lengths about the tragic consequences possible from thinking that target fixation is a trivial problem.

It is insufficient to simply post the advice that you should avoid target fixation. Saying “don’t fixate” is all very well, but once it starts, you need a positive technique to get yourself out in one piece. So once you are in trouble, use target fixation to save your skin.

Don’t look at the oncoming truck/tree/pothole; figure out where you would rather be and fixate on that instead. In fact, those of you that have taken the MSF classes know that “target fixation” is an excellent way to control skids – fixate on a point dead ahead on the horizon, and you’ll be well on the way towards automatically correcting most skids.

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