

By [Mark Prociw](#) May 5, 2009 **2**

For those who've had to pack their bike away for the cold winter months, spring is an exciting time. The warmer weather, the budding flowers, the longer evenings. All that is begging you to **get out riding again**.

But let's not be too hasty! We know you want to ride but let's not forget: Safety First. **Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month is in May** for just that reason. People are anxious to get out of their cooped up houses and get on the road but they may get too excited to remember some basic motorcycle safety practices.

**Here are ten motorcycle safety tips to keep you alive and well this season:**

### **1. Make eye contact**

Never assume others see you. Always try to make eye contact with drivers who may be about to pull into your path.

### **2. Read "vehicle language"**

Even when drivers, cyclists and pedestrians do see you approaching, they often misjudge your distance and speed. Don't rely on them.

### **3. Watch out for left-turning vehicles at intersections**

Getting hit by an oncoming vehicle that's turning left is the most common type of motorcycle crash.

### **4. Check behind when turning left from a highway**

Watch your mirrors and make sure you have plenty of space behind. The drivers behind might not slow down for you.

### **5. Look out for hazardous road conditions**

Wet roads, fluid spills, sand, gravel, highway sealant, railroad tracks, potholes and other road-surface hazards reduce your traction. They cause many falls.

### **6. Take it easy on the curves**

Many crashes happen there. You might overshoot the road or cross the centre line and get hit by oncoming traffic. Watch the road ahead, slow down and choose the correct lane position-before entering a curve.

### **7. Wear a good helmet**

Helmets prevent head injuries in 67 per cent of crashes and deaths in 29 per cent. Make sure your helmet has a sticker showing that it meets current safety standards. Avoid buying a used helmet. It may have been in a crash, and the damage may not be obvious.

### **8. Wear protective clothing designed for motorcycle riders**

It can provide some protection during a crash, as well as shield you from the weather and flying debris. Keeping warm and dry will help you stay alert and maintain coordination. Wear your riding gear in layers so you can adjust to changing conditions. Jeans give little protection. Never ride in lightweight pants or shorts.

### **9. Protect your eyes and face**

Constant wind can make your eyes water, preventing you from spotting hazards. Flying insects, dust and debris can hurt your eyes and face. The best protection is a full-face helmet with a built-in face shield.

### **10. Be visible**

Wear bright, reflective clothing. Add extra reflective material to it or wear a reflective vest. Likewise, buy a bright-coloured helmet and stick reflective tape to the back and sides. Always keep your headlight on. Ride in the lane position where other drivers can easily see you and you've got room to move. Avoid all other vehicles' blind spots.