Overtaking Safely

Having a collision while overtaking is one of the most common and lethal types of motorcycling accidents. Overtaking requires the skill to judge speed and distance, as well as a good knowledge of your bike's acceleration and braking capabilities. If you're on a bike you're not used to riding, ensure you take the time you need to properly learn and understand how it reacts to acceleration and braking in different gears, before doing any overtaking.

THE HAZARDS

The Reactions of Others

You have no idea how a driver or rider will react when they see you overtaking them. You cannot assume they will slow down to let you in - they may do just the opposite. They may even actively try to block you from overtaking.

Other drivers you approach from behind may not see you at all, if they are not vigilant about checking their mirrors, especially if you are riding fast. You can be upon them before they know you are there, and you cannot rely on them behaving appropriately. If they get a fright, they can swerve right into your path.

Blocks of Traffic

Vehicles that are closely grouped together form one very large obstacle to negotiate. They also significantly reduce your visibility, your ability to manoeuvre, and your reaction time. Commonly, drivers in a group or queue of vehicles will not know that you are approaching, and they may swing out in front of you to pass another car at the least opportune moment. Vehicles in front can turn right without warning into driveways, side roads, lay-bys or different lanes, often without even indicating or slowing down to give you time to react. They can also swing out of any of those places, or stop abruptly in front of you at pedestrian crossings or intersections you haven't seen. Treat all other road users with caution.

WHAT TO DO

Read the road ahead to ensure you have a safe clear distance for the entire manoeuvre. Calculate the time, speed and distance you need to overtake safely and remember to use your indicators to let everyone know what you're doing. Don't ever make snap decisions to overtake – it could cost you your life, or someone else's.

When considering overtaking, ensure you know what's ahead, and don't overtake when approaching:

- Corners
- Intersections
- Lay-bys
- Pedestrian crossings
- Hills or dips in the road
- Double yellow lines or other signs that prohibit overtaking.

To overtake safely, you need a really good view of everything going on around you. You can't afford to make any assumptions. Think about the age of the person, the speed they are doing, and the type of vehicle being driven – whether it is loaded up or empty, large or small, fast or slow.

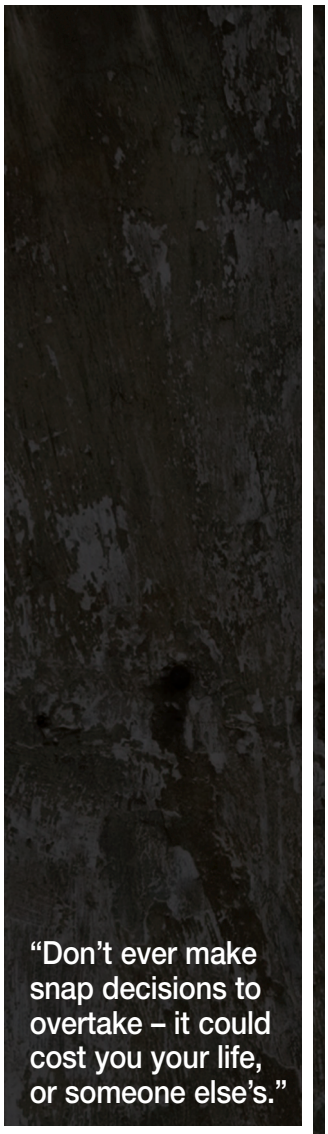
Overtake stationary or slow moving traffic with extreme care. When riding with others, remember group formation riding and overtaking principles (i.e. leaving enough room, maintaining safe distance and speed throughout the manoeuvre). Following another person in an overtaking manoeuvre is dangerous –they can abruptly abort the manoeuvre, leaving you vulnerable with nowhere to go.

On completion of an overtaking manoeuvre, assume your correct place in the road and maintain a safe speed for your own benefit as well as that of the driver behind you. Don't force them to brake.

Nothing is so important that it cannot wait for you to know whether it is safe to overtake. The longer you think about it, the more time you lose – valuable seconds that can make the difference between safety and suicide.

Be aware that the more time you spend in the oncoming lane - the more at risk you are. Make good decisions with your overtaking - and get it over and done with as quickly as possible so you can minimise the time spent across the centre line.

Fundamentally, if you have to think too hard about an overtaking manoeuvre - don't do it!



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