

Ride Hard Ride Safe

ENJOY THE RIDE

AND

BE RESPONSIBLE

STEVE GROVER

Ride Hard Ride Safe: Enjoy the Ride and Be Responsible

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my parents.

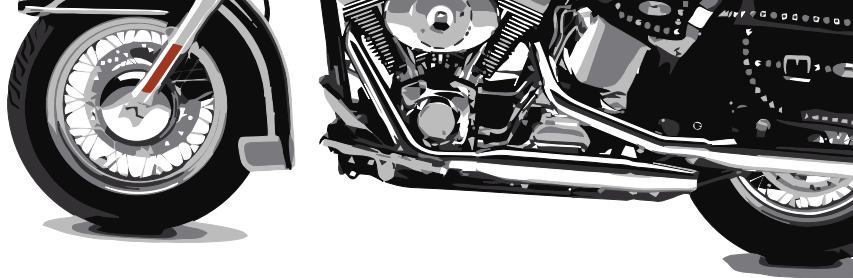
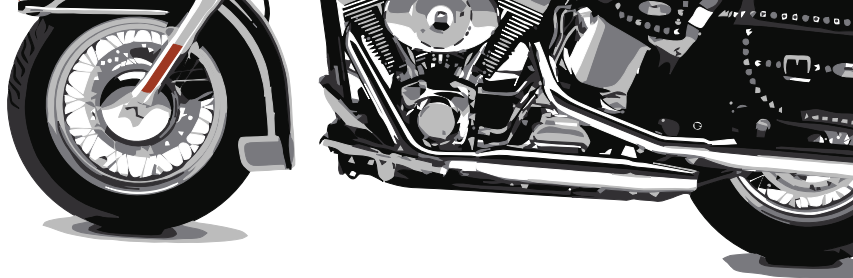


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INTRODUCTION

I'm a lawyer who enjoys riding motorcycles. But whether I'm in a hushed courtroom or roaring down the highway on my MV Agusta 800 RR Dragster, I encounter others who think people like me shouldn't be on the road. They have negative preconceptions about motorcycles and their place on the landscape.

Some people I've talked to think motorcyclists are dangerous. They even see them as enemies. It strikes me as odd that such divisive feelings are engendered by an activity with so much potential for unifying people from very different walks of life.

But then I remember how my parents felt.

My mother was worried when I said I wanted to start riding, and my dad, who was a doctor in Calgary, flat-out told me not to do it. Though he himself had been a biker—in the 1970s he bought a Yamaha 250cc—he gave up riding when he started a family. Working in a hospital, he saw first-hand what could happen to someone who

doesn't ride responsibly or simply becomes embroiled in an accident caused by someone else.

So for a while, I didn't ride. I satisfied my need for speed by skiing. Growing up in Calgary, which remains my home today, I was an hour and a half from some of the best ski resorts in the world. As a teenager, I skied every weekend. I still ski. I've always enjoyed the mountains.

As I grew older, however, I wanted something I could do in the summertime, an activity that, like skiing, would enable me to responsibly enjoy speed but that wouldn't require a covering of snow. So I looked into motorcycling. I thought bikes were cool. They looked really fast. I saw a lot of riders on the road, saw them enjoying life, socializing, meeting at cafes or shops. And I had clients who enjoyed riding even though they had been injured in motorcycling accidents. So I started asking around and decided to go for it. I got my Class 6 motorcycle license and never looked back.

In these pages, I hope to educate not only motorcyclists but also those who drive cars, buses or tractor-trailers. Motorcyclists, too, are human beings, and they have a right to the road; that's the message I want to convey to other motorists. But this book isn't a blanket apology for motorcyclists. It's an appeal to their better natures. For not only do they have rights, they have responsibilities. And *that's* the message I want to convey to *them*.

With this book, I hope to promote responsible motorcycling. But more than that, I hope to make the road safe—for everyone—because we all share it. And despite what some may think, that's not a bad thing. On the contrary: The road can bring us together. It can bridge gaps and forge human connections even as each of us is coming from and going completely different places. We just have to be aware of our surroundings, drive responsibly and respect one another. If we do that, we can enjoy, collectively as well as individually, the vast and exhilarating human pageant we call the open road.

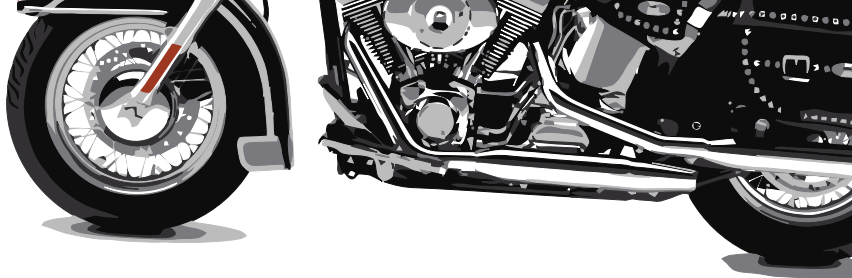


SKYVIEW

Harley-Davidson



INDUSTRIAL



CHAPTER 1:

Why Do People Ride?

In late August 2015, I was in court representing a motorcyclist who had been injured in a car accident. My client was a Hell's Angel. His uncle, who's a friend of mine, had referred him to me. The other party was at fault, and we were trying to reach a settlement with his insurance company. So we were in Edmonton for a hearing. Per my advice, he was wearing a long-sleeve shirt to hide his tattoos from the judge.

This client and I are from totally different spheres of life. During breaks, though, he and I never ran out of things to talk about. Mostly we talked about motorcycles. We might not have had much else in common, but we had riding. He was trying to convince me to buy a Harley-Davidson.

Though I was drawn to motorcycles for their growling speed on the open road, I soon found that the best thing about them was how quickly they traverse figurative distance: the generational and cultural divides that can

separate liberals from conservatives, fathers from sons, lawyers from Hell's Angels. In this book I'll share my secrets for communing with the world at large astride the bike of your choice—for getting to know the person next to you as well as the person inside of you while enjoying a sport that's equal parts \$1,000-helmet practicality and *Easy Rider* romance. *Easy Rider* is the 1969 movie that captured perfectly the realities and perceptions of motorcycling, especially in this exchange between the characters George Hanson, played by Jack Nicholson, and Billy, played by Dennis Hopper:

Billy: Hey, man. All we represent to them, man, is somebody who needs a haircut.

George: Oh, no. What you represent to them is freedom.

Freedom has always been part of motorcycling's appeal. Sometimes I feel like I should just give up my law practice and ride all over the globe like Ewan McGregor did in the TV series *Long Way Round*. But there's a flipside to that—a feeling of community and accountability, of being part of something bigger than oneself—and that can be even more rewarding than a sense of freedom. Riding a motorcycle can be a family activity; many men take their sons out to MacLean Creek to go dirt biking. It can be a social activity; with all the motorcycling groups, you can ride on Sundays, make new friends and

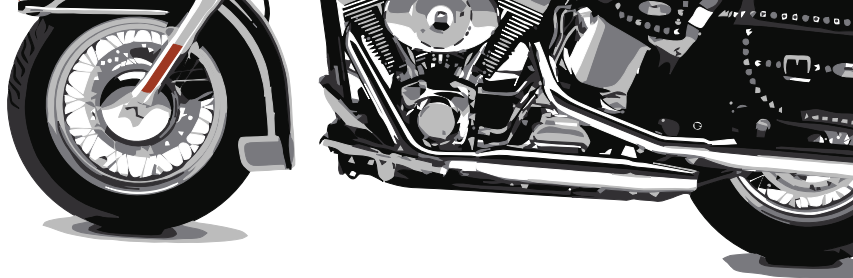
expand your horizons. Or it can be a way of getting close to nature.

We have short summers in Alberta, and riding a motorcycle makes them enjoyable and memorable. It's different than skiing. You're on asphalt or dirt roads. Sometimes it's just you and the bike out there. But sometimes your road intersects with someone else's. You never know whom you'll meet while riding. An accountant and a construction worker might stop on the side of the road and, over coffee in Bragg Creek, talk about motorcycles for half the day before going their separate ways, maybe forever.



Blackfoot
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Year	2014	Model	SUZUKI
Model	GSX750R-AZL4		
Suggested Retail Price	\$12,999.00		
Dealer Price	\$12,500.00	MSRP	84
FINANCING			
\$229.56 MONTHLY PAYMENT			



CHAPTER 2:

Is Riding for You?

If you think you want to start riding, think about it the right way. Be smart. Be methodical. Start by talking to people, looking around and doing research. Decide if motorcycling is really for you or if you're more in love with the idea than the reality. Not only is riding a motorcycle riskier than driving a car, it's expensive if you do it safely and responsibly. Besides the bike itself, you need good equipment. Having a quality helmet is imperative—you can't replace your head—and that piece of equipment alone can cost you \$1,000.

There's an old saying, "Rome wasn't built in a day."

So I think you need to dip your toe into the water.

Here's how:

Talk to people

Everyone I talked to when I was thinking about starting to ride recommended that I take a good motorcycle-training course. So I went out and I talked to a couple

of schools and looked at their programs. I talked to some of the students in the courses. I asked to see their bikes and riding equipment. I found out where they practiced. I support two Calgary motorcycle schools through my law firm: Too Cool Motorcycle School and Calgary Safety Council. I've taken courses at both. They're very good, very professional. They understand that people getting into riding are a little fearful, and they're very patient.

Research bikes

Talk to relatives and friends and Google “motorcycles.” There are many websites where you can look at all kinds of bikes. Plan to start smaller and slower; beginners should resist the temptation to get a big, impressive-looking bike with cultural panache and go instead with something that's easy to handle. It takes time to build up to a bigger, faster bike. You've got to control the power of the bike. I started off at a 600cc engine and over four years built up to a 1000cc bike. You, too, will find the bike that's right for you. There's a bike out there for just about everyone and every kind of riding.

Browse stores

Calgary has motorcyclist shops. That wasn't true as recently as the 1980s, when motorcycling wasn't as



popular. But as Alberta has grown and more people have taken up riding, it's become easier to find motorcycling stores. Visiting these places, seeing and pricing what they have and talking to people who work there can give you a sense of what riding's all about and help you decide whether it would be right for you. Even now, I enjoy going to motorcycle shops and shows and seeing the new bikes and riding gear that are available. The people who own, manage and work in these stores are happy to talk and generally very helpful. I found them all very receptive and genuine.

Attend a show

Every year, on the first weekend after New Year's, there's a motorcycle show at the BMO Centre in Calgary. All the dealers, manufacturers, motorcyclists and motorcycling schools are there, and you'll find everything from Kawasakis to Harley-Davidsons. You can even sit on the bikes and get a feel for them. It's a great event, especially for people who don't have time to go to the shops and parents who have a teenager on the verge of taking up motorcycling. Many parents are fearful of their child's getting on a bike. If the parents don't ride, then they can educate themselves. Approach finding the right motorcycle for your child the way you would finding a new school for him or her. Thoroughly check it out.

Consider costs

The proper equipment, that which keeps you safe, can cost thousands of dollars. A good helmet alone can run \$1,000 to \$1,700. If you can't afford that, there are some good \$250-\$400 helmets out there made by HJC or Icon. But that's only the beginning. You'll also need riding pants and a jacket capable of protecting you from the asphalt as well as the wind. And you'll need a motorcycle.

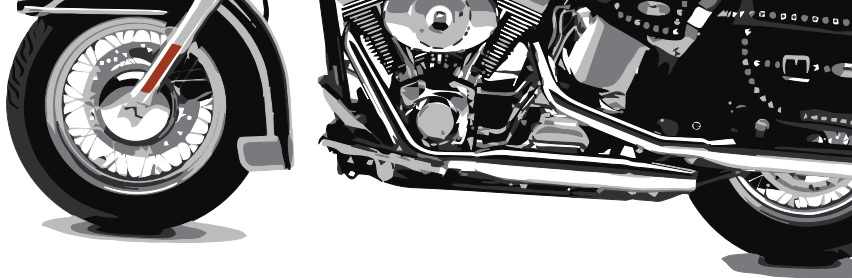
Get a checkup

Make sure you're medically and physically able to ride. Talk to your doctor. Have your eyes checked. Familiarize yourself with the weight of a motorcycle. It's much heavier than a bicycle. Learning how to handle and control it takes time. Don't start with a thousand-pound Harley-Davidson just because all your buddies have one. Many smaller motorcycles look just as good and are easier to handle.

Watch YouTube videos

There are many good ones on biking, and they're easily found with a quick Google search. Short of investing in a motorcycle course, which you'll want to do if you decide riding's for you, these might be the best way to learn what riding's all about when the rubber meets the road.





CHAPTER 3:

So You're Going to Ride

I was surprised to find that some of my clients didn't have their Class 6 endorsement to ride bikes in Alberta.

"I'd grown up riding dirt bikes as a little kid," one said, "and so I went to a motorcycle shop and they sold me a sport bike and I hit the road without my motorcycle license." Though I represent these people, I thought it was irresponsible for them to be on the road without being properly educated or licensed.

The truth, however, is that many people start riding without first considering legal and ethical issues. If you decide that riding's for you, the next step isn't buying a motorcycle and hitting the road. It's *preparing* to.

Education

Don't go into motorcycling thinking that because you rode dirt bikes on your dad's farm you're good to go. Sure, you have to know how to ride a bicycle before

you can ride a motorcycle. But a motorcycle's different, bigger, heavier. Get used to that. Know how to handle a motorcycle. Take a course. It can cost anywhere from \$600 to \$800, but it's worth every penny, so find one that fits your budget and time frame. You'll be surprised by what you didn't know about riding. When one of my brother-in-law's friends was taking a motorcycle course in Toronto, one student didn't even know how to keep his balance. For the first two days, instructors pushed this guy around on a bike, holding him up.

Licensing

After taking a motorcycle course, go get a copy of the Rider's Guide to Operation, Safety and Licensing of Motorcycles, Mopeds and Power-Assisted Bicycles, issued by the Government of Alberta (it's free at any registry), and study it (I read it twice). Then look for online practice versions of the Alberta written test and take them—multiple times. And when you think you're ready, go into a registry office to take the written test and get your Class 6 learner's license. With this learner's permit you can ride with another person, someone with a Class 6 endorsement, until you feel you're ready to take the road test for your own Class 6 license.

Don't take it personally if you don't pass the road test the first time around. I had to take it twice. The first time, the tester took me through a zone that immediately went from 50 to 80 kilometers an hour on a curve and I didn't

speed up fast enough; I accelerated only to 60 because I was timid, and the tester was concerned that a car or tractor-trailer could run me over from behind. You're a hazard if you're not going fast enough. You can cause a big accident. My instructor at the motorcycle school told me: "That tester was just looking out for you Steve. He didn't want you to be on the road not knowing how to ride."

Besides physical balance, riding a motorcycle requires another kind of balance. You must remain alert, watchful and aware of your surroundings, sweeping intersections with your eyes to make sure no car is approaching from the left or right whose driver might not see you or the stop sign. You must watch for people in the road and cars pulling out of driveways or parking lots. But you mustn't be skittish or intimidated. On the contrary: You must be confident. You must be one with your motorcycle. Riding a bike is like riding a horse. *You* have to control *it*, not the other way around. Otherwise riding can get out of hand pretty quickly.

Insurance and registration

Get the proper insurance, not only to protect you but also to protect others who might be injured in an accident. And get your bike registered in Alberta. Without the proper registration and tags on your license plates, you can get pulled over and ticketed.

I'm not here to replace the Alberta Rider's Guide booklet. That's a great manual. It should be on your

coffee table while you're learning to ride. I offer my own advice, counsel and personal experience only to supplement that.

Gear

A tiny chip in the visor of my helmet says a lot about the importance of good protective gear. It's happened when I was riding out to Bragg Creek with my brother-in-law. His back wheel shot a little rock off the road and it hit my visor. If I hadn't had my visor down I probably would have lost my left eye.

I see a lot of people wearing a helmet because it's the law in Alberta, but many of them lack other protective gear. Some wear shorts and flip-flops. I see them and hope they're never in an accident.

Your skin is the biggest organ on your body, and every square inch of it that goes unprotected is at significant risk. If you're in an accident, you could be catastrophically injured. So it's important to dress properly for riding.

I recommend:

A helmet certified by the U.S. Department of Transportation

Get a full helmet, with a visor to protect your face, or at least a helmet and goggles. If you don't want to pay \$1,000, look for a helmet by HJC or Icon. They make

good ones that cost less than \$500, and you can find them at most any motorcycle shop. Just don't get a helmet that's been in an accident; its ability to protect you has been compromised. If you're intent on saving money by finding a used helmet, start by going through people you trust. Maybe a buddy of yours is getting out of riding or happens to have an extra helmet he'll sell or give you. That's how I got mine. A friend was getting married and didn't have the time for riding anymore and sold his motorcycle, so he gave me one of his helmets. It was nearly new.

A jacket, preferably leather with elbow and shoulder pads

If you can't afford a leather jacket, get a good, \$300-\$400 synthetic one made by Icon or Joe Rocket. Go on Amazon or <http://www.kijiji.ca>. I know a lot of guys who have found excellent used equipment put up for sale on these sites by motorcyclists who either have outgrown it or simply want something new. Just be sure it's not ripped or torn. You don't want anything that's been in an accident.

Riding pants, preferably leather

They'll cost you anywhere from \$200 to \$500. If that's too much, look into Kevlar jeans with padding; they range from \$200 to \$300.

A back brace

This can cost anywhere from \$100 to \$200. You may find a good used back brace on Kijiji.

Boots

The most common motorcycle injury is broken ankles. Boots protect this part of your body. So although they cost up to \$200, they're worth every penny.

Gloves

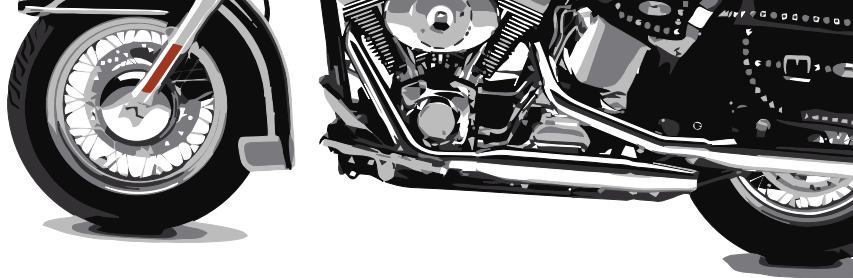
These range from \$50 to \$200, but they're essential.

You'll also want to invest in rain gear. Take a poncho if you're going on a long ride of a day or more.

What *don't* you want to wear? Here's a short list: a t-shirt; shorts; and sneakers or flip-flops.







CHAPTER 4:

Finding the right MOTORCYCLE

It's taken me multiple bikes to figure out what is the right bike for me, and every time I see a new motorcycle come on the market I think that's the bike for me.

Right now my favorite bike is my naked bike, but choosing a bike is a very personal decision, and you might find you like a different kind. There are lots of them out there.

Harley-Davidson bikes became popular after *Easy Rider*. Now, along with its iconic 1000- to 1,400cc cruisers, Harley also makes smaller, lighter bikes, motorcycles in the 700- to 800cc range.

Victory is another popular motorcycle manufacturer. You see a lot of Victory bikes out there. You also see a lot of **Indian** cruisers; they're generally more refined than Harleys and even more expensive. Then there are the sport bikes made by **Kawasaki**, **Honda** and **Suzuki**—the 600- to 800cc bikes. The Suzuki Gixxer's a good bike. So is the Honda CBR.

Ducati makes good super-sport bikes. So does **BMW**. I have a BMW HP4, which is a 1000cc sport-racing bike. I use it at the track, but it's also street legal. I also have a naked bike made by **MV Agusta**, an 800 Dragster RR.

The naked bike was developed in the 1990s when kids in Europe started stripping down their sport bikes to show the engine and frame. Now manufacturers produce naked bikes. They look more aggressive. They're lighter, too. And yet they offer a more upright, relaxed ride than a sport or super sport bike, whose rider leans forward at a sharp angle. I enjoy these bikes.

For a starter bike, however, I recommend something in the 300cc range or lighter. Among the many excellent options for beginning bikers are:

- ⚡ **The Kawasaki Ninja 300cc SE.** This is a great motorcycle; my family has one. I recommend it for a starter bike.
- ⚡ **A scooter.** Scooters are very popular in Europe. There's nothing wrong with starting out one of these.
- ⚡ **A dirt bike.** Kawasaki makes good dirt bikes. So do Suzuki and KTM; my brother-in-law swears by the latter.

Other options include an adventure bike or three-wheeler for off-roading or touring. These include the BMW F800 GS and 1200 GS; the Ducati Multistrada; the

Polaris Slingshot, a three-wheeler kind of car that with a Class 6 license can seat two; Can-Am bikes, which are three-wheelers with the single wheel in back.

I recommend attending a demo day at a motorcycle store. A lot of shops, stores in Calgary, including Blackfoot Motorsports and Cycle Works, have manufacturers bring in bikes so that registered customers can test-drive them. Just sign up, bring your helmet, gloves, boots, jacket and Class 6 license, and you can try out some bikes.

Before I purchased my MV Agusta in May 2015, I attended the demo day at Blackfoot Motorsports and rode a 800 Dragster RR for 30 minutes. I got a feel for the bike and realized it was a good one for me.

It's hard to lay down your own money unless you've ridden a bike and know what it's like. You wouldn't buy a car without taking it for a test drive. So I recommend demo days. Most every manufacturer has them. Find out when they are, sign up online or at host shops and then attend some. Ride a couple bikes. Participating stores are very accommodating. They stand to make a sale by helping you test the motorcycles.

If you purchase a used bike, make sure you get maintenance records from the previous owner or review them before you purchase the motorcycle. You want to make sure that the bike you're purchasing has been properly maintained. The last thing you want is to buy a bike that

breaks down. Not only have you wasted your money, but you're also at risk of having an accident.

If you purchase through a dealership, talk to your sales person about a maintenance schedule. Ask when you should bring it in for its first checkup. Make sure that your motorcycle is properly maintained according to manufacturer specifications. Most manufacturers recommend after you purchase your bike to have it serviced at the first 1,000 kilometers.

And, finally, make sure you get a handbook or operator's manual—most manufacturers provide one—and read through it from cover to cover. It will help you learn your way around your new bike.

The first time you drove a car, you had to know where and what all the instruments and gauges were for. You had to learn the feel of the steering wheel and brake, the location of the clutch if you drove a standard-transmission automobile and what all the dials on the radio control. Riding a motorcycle is the same. You have to get to know a bike before taking it out on the road. The parts of a motorcycle include:

Brakes

The front brake can supply as much as 70% of your stopping power. The control for this is near your right hand, just in front of the gas lever. The back brake is a pedal near your right foot.

Gears

These are near your left foot. Most bikes have six gears, but some have five.

Clutch

In front of the left handlebar of the bike is the clutch.

Gas lever

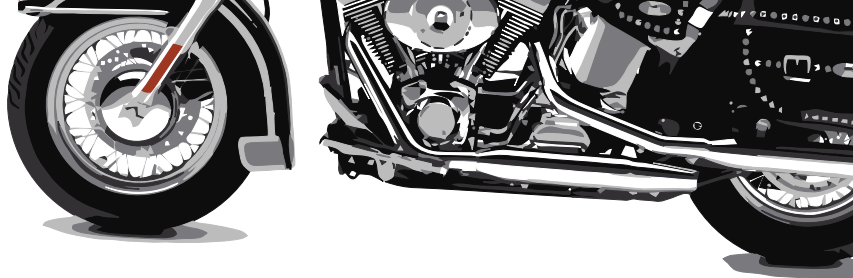
Just behind the front brake is the lever for speeding up. Learn how to use your turn signals and also how to check to see if they're operative, which you always should do before hitting the road. Learn, too, how to shift gears and what it feels like to do so, becoming familiar with the friction zone. Get a sense for what it feels like releasing the brake and going into gear and moving the gas. A lot of people stall out at this stage, so it's really important to practice your friction zone. Every bike is different.

Also become familiar with the low fuel light if there is one. When you're riding along the highway and notice you're running out of fuel, you want to find the closest gas station to pull over and refuel.

I've run out of gas a couple times and had to pull over onto the side of the road. Fortunately, someone was able to come pick me up, take me to a gas station and then drive me back to my bike so I could refuel and get

back on the road. Make sure before you go on a ride that you have a full tank of gas, or at least half a tank. If you're low, head to a gas station first.

Over the years, manufacturers have standardized the basic controls on motorcycles, but all that means is that everything's in the same place. The way controls feel and handle can vary widely. Make sure you know how your bike responds to you.



CHAPTER 5:

Hitting the road

For every rider, the ultimate goal is hitting the road; it's an exhilarating feeling.

For the beginner, the moment when rubber meets road is especially exciting. Just don't be so impatient to start riding that you do so ill prepared or carelessly.

Before even swinging a leg over your bike, take a few moments to make sure you and it are ready to go. (See **PRE-RIDE CHECKLIST**, in this chapter.)

Then, when you're all set, ride properly and responsibly. I go by SEE, a mental system for safe motorcycling:

- ⚡ *S* for search around you for potential hazards, especially when riding in traffic;
- ⚡ *E* for evaluate potential for hazards such as turning cars or railway tracks; and
- ⚡ *E* for execute the proper action to avoid perceived hazards.

PRE-RIDE CHECKLIST

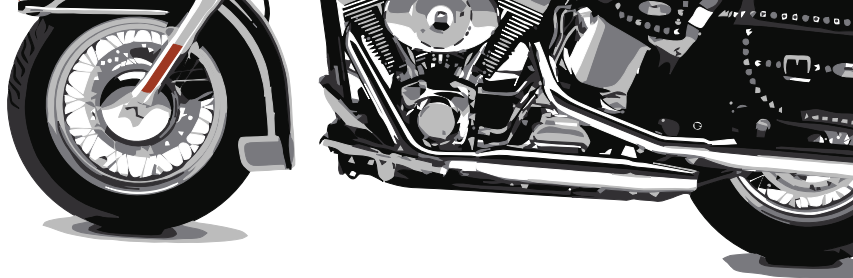
- ✓ 1. Do the turn signals work?
- ✓ 2. Does the rear brake light work?
- ✓ 3. Are the tires properly inflated? (Find the PSI rating on the side of your bike and make sure the rear tire in particular isn't underinflated, as this can cause a blowout.)
- ✓ 4. Are the side mirrors clean and properly adjusted?
- ✓ 5. Is the headlight clean?
- ✓ 6. Do you have your cell phone?
- ✓ 7. Do you have a tire gauge? (You can get one free at my office. Just call.)
- ✓ 8. Do you have your license?
- ✓ 9. Do you have your registration and proof of insurance?
- ✓ 10. Do you have your AMA or manufacturer's roadside-help card?
- ✓ 11. Does your horn work?

Always stay vigilant and alert when riding a motorcycle. Never let your eyes fix on one object. Constantly look around. Look straight ahead. Look to the left. Look to the right. Look through one side mirror and then the other. Be especially careful at intersections. Most every accident involving a motorcycle and a car occurs where two or more streets meet, so whenever approaching an

intersection thoroughly sweep the streetscape with your eyes. See what *is* happening. Anticipate what *may*. Focus your attention at least three seconds ahead. Might the driver ahead of you have to brake suddenly because of that unleashed dog running toward the curb? Prepare for that. Is that approaching car whose driver seems to be talking on her cell phone going so fast it's likely to run the stop sign? Prepare for that. Even if it's someone else and not you who's driving or behaving irresponsibly, take it upon yourself to avert the accident that might result. It may well be your own life you save.

Besides making sure you see everything you need to see, make sure others see you. Being visible also is your responsibility. Wear reflective gear. I've always purchased brightly colored helmets--red or fluorescent green or orange. If your riding jacket is earth-tone leather, wear a fluorescent vest over it. One day I saw a man riding a Harley-Davidson. I was headed east and he was going west, and I noticed him in my peripheral vision because he was wearing a bright, lime-green vest over his riding jacket. Pulsating brake lights also make you more visible. They're original equipment on some bikes. If your bike doesn't have them, you can buy some at a shop and have them installed. They're very effective at alerting motorists behind you that you're coming to a stop. If you help others see you, you can avoid being hit or causing an accident.





CHAPTER 6:

Riding Variables

I wouldn't recommend riding at night if you're a beginner. Other motorists can't see you as well. Dusk is the worst time to ride because people's eyes are adjusting from daylight to headlights. So if you have to ride at night, be extra careful and make the following adjustments:

- ⚡ Ride more slowly, especially on winding roads;
- ⚡ Make sure to use your headlight;
- ⚡ Keep an eye on the road surface; it's more difficult at night to see a patch of sand or a pothole;
- ⚡ Leave more distance between you and the vehicle in front of you so you'll have more time to react;
- ⚡ Wear a clean, clear face shield without scratches, not a dark or marred one; dirt and imperfections can make two headlights look like four.

Riding in wet conditions requires extra care as well. Wear rain gear and slow down. When it rains the water brings the oil in the pavement to the surface and the road gets slippery. I recommend trying to avoid riding in the rain if you can, especially if you're a beginner. But I realize that's not always possible. So just be careful. In wet weather, the road often is slipperiest right after the rain starts. After a while, the rain will wash the oil off the road. But even then traction isn't as good as it is on dry pavement.

If the rain gets too strong, find shelter somewhere, *anywhere*—in an indoor heated parking lot, say, or at least under a freeway overpass. Don't try to continue riding. And if the rain turns to hail, find somewhere to go inside if you can; just park or leave your bike and get out of harm's way as best you can until the storm passes.

Wind, too, can be hazardous. Gusty wind is the worst. You may have to lean a bit into the wind to maintain your position. Keep your motorcycle on the side of the lane that the wind is coming from. Brace yourself for sudden gusts and be ready to react appropriately.

If you're a new rider, try to avoid inclement weather conditions if possible. Avoid heavy traffic, too. Practice in a parking lot. That's probably where the instructors in your motorcycle course will teach you. Even though

I'm an experienced rider, I like to avoid busy roads. I get out west of Calgary, near Springbank, and hit the country lanes there.

Whether you're a new rider or an experienced rider, busy roads can seem like one of those arcade games where you're faced with trying to avoid all sorts of hazards as you drive. There are a lot of cars around and a lot of people, and many of them may not be aware of the motorcyclist approaching from the left or right. And then suddenly you're on them, and they're on you; they signal and, thinking they're in the clear, turn out in front of you—and there's an accident.

But even back roads have their share of hazards. In rural or suburban areas, animals can pose a danger. The biggest problem is domestic animals, especially dogs. Most seem to have an urge to chase motorcycles. Those that don't might blunder into your path.

Don't let an animal distract you and cause an accident. Here are some tips for handling encounters of the furry kind:

1. Slow down well before you reach the animal;
2. Do not—repeat *do not*—kick at the animal;
3. Speed up just before reaching the animal; if it's a dog that seems intent on intercepting you, you'll throw off its timing;

4. Don't worry so much about the deer you do see; look out for the deer you *don't*: its mate. They often travel in pairs.

Hitting a deer with a motorcycle is a tough way to put venison on the table, so stay alert. I make sure I can see the open road and everything ahead of me, watching out not only for the occasional deer in the road but also for potholes and pieces of blown-out tire and cars or trucks that may be coming out of intersections or highways.

Sometimes the road surface itself can be a hazard. Try to avoid poor road conditions such as broken or damaged pavement and stay on roadways that are clear and free of debris. Unfortunately, that's not always possible. In Alberta, the weather's hard on roads. They crack and have potholes. It's not the same as in Vancouver. In Alberta our extreme and variable weather conditions--dry heat, dry winters, hail and heavy rains—tend to break up the asphalt.

Road construction is another concern. If a road is a poor condition or under construction, avoid it if you can. These days, a simple Google Maps search will show which roads are under construction or heavy with traffic. Use this to your advantage and plan trips accordingly, skirting problem areas.

And, finally, passing can be cause for concern—in any conditions. Be methodical about going around another vehicle. Follow these steps:

- ⚡ Time passing the vehicle in front of you so that you begin the process when you're about two seconds behind it;
- ⚡ Position yourself in the left side of your lane;
- ⚡ Check for oncoming traffic to make sure you have enough room to pass safely. Don't even think about attempting to overtake the vehicle in front of you if there's a corner or blind curve coming up;
- ⚡ Check your mirrors;
- ⚡ Check over your shoulder to make sure nobody's in your blind spot;
- ⚡ Move into the left or oncoming lane and proceed to pass the vehicle in front of you, getting by it as quickly and safely as possible without exceeding the speed limit. If it's a slow-moving truck you're passing, you may want to shift down a gear so you can accelerate more rapidly as you go around it;
- ⚡ Signal your intention to return to the right-hand lane once you're clear of the vehicle you're passing;

- ⚡ Check over your shoulder to make sure there's enough room between you and the vehicle; sometimes a motorist will speed up as you're overtaking him or her, but most drivers will respect your right to pass and allow you to do so unchallenged;
- ⚡ Return to your lane, cancel your signal, and proceed with care.

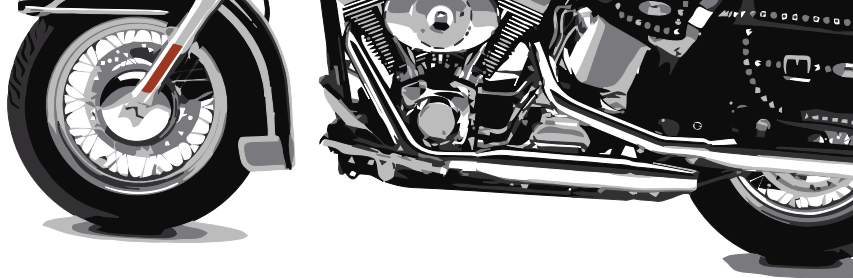
You can find more information on how to handle difficult situations from the previously mentioned Alberta government-published booklet on safe riding. The government in Alberta also maintains a helpful website called saferoads.com. I recommend checking it out.

Number two, you hit gravel in a blind corner. You're out riding the twisties when seemingly without warning, you round the corner to find a patch of sand and gravel, leaves, poo, whatever, in your path. You put your front tire in it and you wipe out. Be careful of this with the winters here in Alberta. In the spring time we tend to have a lot of gravel on the roadway until the roads are cleaned.

TOP Ten common CAUSES OF motorcycle accidents (from Wes Silver's rideapart.com)

1. **A car or truck turns left in front of the motorcyclist** because the driver fails to see it or misjudges its speed. Be aware of inattention, distraction, blind spots and the tendency of drivers to see only other cars;
2. **The motorcyclist hits gravel or other debris on a blind curve and wipes out.** Be especially careful of this in the springtime in Alberta, when the roads are full of gravel and other debris deposited by winter weather. Or simply avoid the roads in Calgary until after the city cleans them;
3. **The motorcyclist takes a corner or curve too fast and wipes out.** Ride only as fast as you can see and use visual clues like telephone poles and signs to judge the direction of a road as it disappears over a blind crest;
4. **A car changes lanes into the motorcyclist.** Be aware of other motorists' blind spots and spend as little time in them as possible. Only if you catch a driver's eyes in his side-view mirror should you assume they can see you;
5. **A car hits the motorcyclist from behind at a stop sign, crosswalk, or intersection.** Use stationary cars as your crumple zone. Pull in front of a car that's already stopped at the intersection, if there is one. Then wave nicely and rest easy knowing you're cushioned from impact;

6. **The motorcyclist's trailing buddy fails to stop and hits him from behind.** Ride in staggered formation to clear everyone's line of sight and keep the bikes out of line with one another so temporary inattention won't cause a collision. Or ride alone, like I do;
7. **The motorcyclist locks the front brake.** You see a deer, grab a fistful of the front brake and the next thing you know you're lying on the ground watching your bike cartwheel down the road. Learn your front brake. Practice using it; It's the most powerful and difficult-to-master component of your motorcycle;
8. **A parked motorist opens the door of his or her car or truck.** Nathan No Look swings his door wide open right in front of you. Never ride between an active traffic lane and parked cars.
9. **The road becomes slippery.** It starts to rain. The pavement turns unfriendly. Don't panic. Good tires will surprise you with how well they do in wet or snowy conditions. Just slow down and don't make sudden moves that might compromise your traction;
10. **The motorcyclist is under the influence of alcohol.** *Don't. Drink. And. Ride. Period.* Alcohol is a factor in half of the world's bike wrecks. Stay away from it on days you ride.



CHAPTER 7:

The Buddy Factor

Inclement weather, hazardous road conditions, inattentive motorists and unpredictable animals aren't the only variables you'll find yourself dealing with as a bike rider. In this chapter I'll address other challenging situations you're likely to encounter astride your motorcycle and suggest some ways of handling them.

Riding in groups

Before going on a group ride, make sure all the members agree on two or three hand signals--let's stop, need gas, I'm hungry—and a few rules for the group.

During the ride:

- ⚡ Space yourselves two seconds apart from one another, in a staggered formation.
- ⚡ Stay in a coherent group. Breaking up is easy when riding in groups of more than four, but that ends up confusing members of the group and other motorists.

- ⚡ Wait in pairs at a stoplight or stop sign.
- ⚡ Pass other vehicles individually, not in pairs or groups.

Carrying a passenger

In my years of riding a bike, I was taught in my motorcycle class, it's not a good idea to have a passenger. I've never had a passenger on the back of my motorcycle, even though I have the ability to carry one with an extra little seat and foot pegs on the back of the bike for a rear passenger. It's foreseeable that people are going to have passengers on their bikes. I don't recommend it, but at the end of the day, I'm not here to live your life. If you feel comfortable having your girlfriend or your wife or your kid on the back of the bike, that's your choice, but if you're going to have a passenger, I think it's important to highlight important facts that I think are important to make the riding experience fun for both you and your passenger.

Carrying a passenger

It's always nice to have company, but putting extra weight on the motorcycle will affect handling.

When carrying a passenger:

- ⚡ Adjust your suspension and tire pressure to compensate for the added weight. Check

your owner's manual for appropriate specifications.

- ⚡ Ask your passenger to mount the bike from the same side every time and to warn you before climbing on.
- ⚡ Require your passenger to wear protective gear of a quality equal to yours. If you just picked up your girlfriend down at the lake and she's wearing her bikini and flip-flops, help her find something more substantial to put on before riding. Otherwise you're endangering both of you.
- ⚡ Don't let a passenger wear shoelaces or loose pant legs that might catch on the rear wheel or chain parts. Rubber soles, too, are ill advised; they can melt and make a mess.
- ⚡ Show the passenger the hot parts of the bike, such as the header pipes and muffler, and caution him or her against coming in contact with these.
- ⚡ Instruct your passenger to hold onto your waist or hips and ask him or her to lean forward slightly when you leave from a stop or accelerate along a highway.
- ⚡ Give yourself more time to brake. With the added weight of a passenger, slowing down takes longer. Remember that and take it into account.

- ⚡ Have your passenger brace him- or herself firmly against your waist and lean back slightly when braking so there's no sudden forward shifting of that person's weight.
- ⚡ Advise your passenger not to lean to one side or another unless you do. You don't want the person behind you hanging on the bike at 30 degrees for no reason; that affects the steering. But when you lean going around a corner, your passenger should lean as well. Instruct him or her to look over your shoulder in the direction of the turn when you're going through a corner. That will put the passenger's weight where you want it.

One more thing, and this is important:

Riding with other people, you might be tempted to drink.

Don't.

You shouldn't have any alcohol at all before riding a bike. If you're going with your buddies to the bar or decide to stop at a roadside bar and grill during a long ride, stick to coffee, soda pop or water. Do not have even one beer. One easily can turn into two or three, and before you know it you're getting back on your bike with diminished faculties and slower reaction times. It can be a challenge to control a motorcycle under the best of conditions. Under the influence of even a little

alcohol, it can be dangerous. Not only are you a danger to yourself, but you are also a danger to other cars or pedestrians on the roadway.

Stay away from drugs, too. Even over-the-counter medications like Tylenol or Advil could affect your ability to operate a motorcycle. If you're on a prescription medication, make sure there are no side effects that might impair your ability to control your bike. And definitely don't operate a motorcycle after consuming illegal street drugs like marijuana, cocaine or heroin.

Riding with other people in your ear

A lot of people want the Bluetooth experience while riding a bike. They have a Bluetooth device attached to their helmets.

We're living in a time of information and digital gadgets. We can contact anybody we want. We can get information within seconds. It's all at our fingertips.

I like to just to go out there and enjoy the riding experience without all that. Indeed, one of the reasons I ride is to get away, to be free of the demands on my time, attention and senses that otherwise inform my days.

But even if you don't mind being plugged in while riding, you might want to consider its potential for distraction. I don't recommend riding with Bluetooth because it can

interfere with your ability to focus on the road. But if you feel you need a Bluetooth device attached to your helmet so that you can have phone conversations while riding, be aware of how it can affect your ability to be in the moment and concentrate and use it safely. Pull off the road if you feel you have to take a call, exchange texts with someone or Google something.

Also be aware that listening to music also is potentially distracting. Many bigger bikes, including some Harley-Davidson cruisers, come equipped radios and CD players. If you have one of these and like to listen to tunes while riding, that's fine; by all means, you should enjoy the amenities and special features of your bike. But take extra care to be cognizant of your surroundings if you listen to music while riding.

And no matter what, *keep within the speed limit*. Distractions caused by riding with others or Bluetooth technology or music tend to divert a rider's attention from the speedometer; it's easy to end up going too fast or too slow. Neither is good.

If you must exceed the speed limit—generally I don't recommend doing so, but I realize that sometimes a rider might have to give it the gas to get out of harm's way—then stay within 10 kilometers of the speed limit.

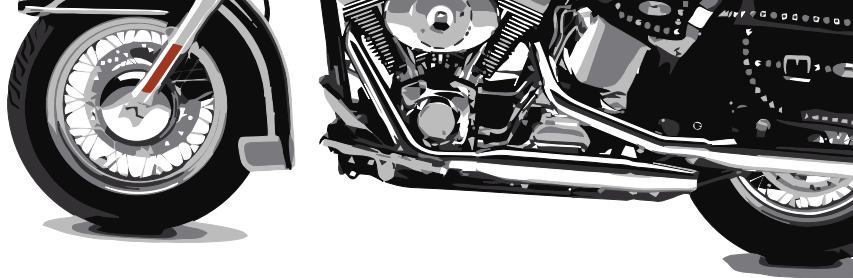
Do not zigzag in and out of traffic. It's dangerous. It also creates an image that motorcycle riders are irresponsible. You may cause an accident, injuring yourself or others.

Be responsible. Remember: You individually represent *all* motorcycle riders in the eyes of other motorists who don't have bikes.

Again, the road is there to be shared by all of us. With Alberta winters the way they are, car and truck drivers won't see many motorcyclists then; the roads are too snowy. But every year with the arrival of spring, bikes will join the human pageant on our highways and byways, and the need for all of us to be aware of and respect one another's right to the road becomes even more critical.

So look twice and save a life.





CHAPTER 8:

Off the Beaten Path

The Pacific Coast Highway in California becomes a snake as it winds through the mountains and canyons outside Los Angeles and turns into Mulholland Highway. We call it “the twisties.” The road there curves back and forth so many times and often so sharply that it can be dangerous; there are about 300 motorcycle accidents a year on the snake of the Mulholland Highway in the canyon area.

But this lush and breathtaking ride continues calling like a siren song to untold numbers of motorcyclists. The risks, such as they are, can be managed and minimized if you ride responsibly. And, oh, the rewards!

There’s nothing like getting on your bike and getting off the beaten path. It’s one of the greater wonders of owning a motorcycle, and it’s surprisingly easy to do. The world is full of rides such as the snake in the Santa Monica mountains, and I’ve had the pleasure of experiencing some of them.

Here are a few:

The Pacific Coast and Mulholland Highways near Los Angeles

A buddy of mine and I rented bikes from a shop in Hollywood. It was a good deal.

We asked the guy we were renting from if the ride was dangerous. He answered bluntly. The guys that have accidents are idiots, he told us. They're taking turns too quick. They're not aware. He said most of the accidents happen when a rider hits a blind curve too fast. That registered with us right away. Don't go crazy on the snake. You can go fast, but be sure to maintain firm control of your bike.

It was a Friday morning when we headed out. The day was quite hot: 104 degrees, the dry heat of the canyons.

Along the way, we stopped at the Rock Star. It's a well-known restaurant and stopping area for motorcyclists around there—an old establishment run by a married couple. We grabbed lunch. I probably should've gotten the burgers and fries, but I ordered a ham-and-cheese sandwich with lettuce and tomato, on brown bread. It cost \$9 though I could have made it at home for fifty cents. And it was the only thing I didn't like about that whole day. Even the experience of the restaurant was enjoyable, the ordinary food notwithstanding. The place

was straight out of the 1960s. We chatted with some other motorcyclists.

I recommend stopping there. It's a little rundown, but it's an original. They've got a lot of photos on the walls. It wasn't busy the day we went, but I've heard that as many as 500 riders can be found there on a Saturday or a Sunday afternoon. It's an institution.

By the time my buddy and I finished our ride that day, it was 5 p.m. We were exhausted. But what a day that was.

And what a ride.

I've done twisties before, but these were kind of hard. If you don't have a lot of riding skills, don't hit the snake. There's a lot of up and down, but I'd do it again. It was absolutely beautiful.

If you're not into the hitting the canyons, just rent a bike and go up and down the Pacific Coast Highway. See Malibu. Go down to Venice Beach. Hit Huntington Beach. Then come back to L.A. It's a long day but worth every minute.

My ride there has had a lasting effect on my life.

Calgary to Cochrane

I've ridden extensively through Calgary. I grew up in this city. I know the roads well. If I have to get somewhere, I know the quickest way.

A good ride is to go out from Calgary to Cochrane. There's a famous ice cream shop called MacKay's out there. Just take Highway 1 westbound to Highway 22 and head out to Cochrane.

Calgary to Kananaskis

Take Highway 1 and get off into the twisties. It's a great ride. Just be careful on those curves—and with the wind.

Calgary to Banff

It's always enjoyable to head out to Banff. Like the road to Kananaskis, it gets kind of windy on the outskirts of Calgary, just before you hit the Rocky Mountains, but if you're aware of that and account for it, you'll be fine.

Medellin, Colombia, to Cali, Colombia

I went to Medellin, Colombia, to visit a friend and decided to make a side trip to the coffee region of Cali, Colombia. I arranged the ride through a company called Motolombia. I rode a BMW 1200GS, and we did a little adventure ride on pavement and a couple dirt roads. I enjoyed it.

Rides I'd like to take include:

Namibia, Africa

This one's popular. A friend of mine did it and really enjoyed it. Check out the website <http://ride2roam.com/>.



Vietnam

There are a number of popular riding areas here, and the landscape, ranging from coastlines to craggy mountains shrouded in mist, are breathtaking. Visit the website <http://mototoursasia.com/motorbike-tours/vietnam>.

The South of France and the Cote d'Azur

Rent a bike and enjoy the French Riviera.

If you don't have the time or money to ride abroad, explore Alberta; you'll find many good rides. A lot of people hit Invermere-Revelstoke.

In mid-August, Blackfoot Motor Sports does an annual Calgary-to-Nelson rally. You go from Calgary to Creston, B.C., to Nelson, a great ride. I haven't done it, but one day I will.

Other enjoyable Alberta rides are Grand Prairie to Jasper; Chip Lake to Nordegg; Edmonton to Thunder Lake and Barrhead. In the Banff area, head out to Lake Louise and ride from there to Jasper. That's a spectacular part of the country.

There's also Calgary to Waterton; Edmonton to Dorothy; Bow Island to Coat Trail, which is a good day's ride and quite enjoyable; and, in Wainwright, Dinosaur Provincial Park. Dinosaur Park is pretty famous.

And, finally, if you ride from Calgary to Cochrane, you can go on north to Drayton Valley.

Getting on the road with other people who ride and stopping for lunch and enjoying the Alberta roadways is an experience like no other. The social aspect of riding with friends and other companions is fantastic. A lot of motorcycle groups in the Calgary area take a day ride

from Calgary south to Longview, which is just west of High River. That ride covers a distance of about 84 kilometers. It's a good one.

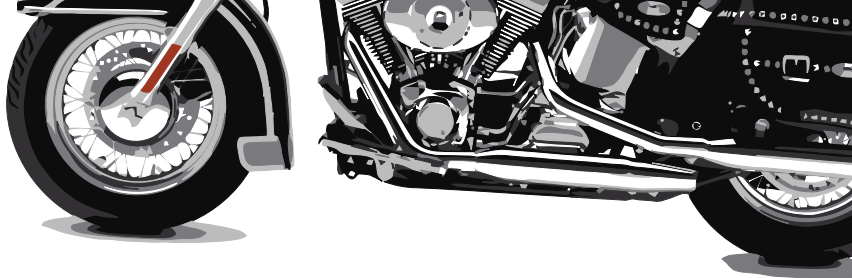
Please feel free email me with information about your own favorite rides across Alberta or Canada at large.

One of the great joys of riding a motorcycle is getting off the beaten path and enjoying all the scenery you can't take in if you're driving a car or truck. We live in the beautiful province of Alberta, and we're right next to British Columbia, so rather than just cruising up and down the streets of Calgary, get out on the open road. Go and enjoy, ride alone, ride with buddies, join a riding group. See the part of the world we all live in and share.

FIVE HELPFUL OPEN ROAD-RIDING WEBSITES

- ⚡ **bestbiking.com**
- ⚡ **motorcycleroads.com**
- ⚡ **bestbikingroads.com**
- ⚡ **expertvagabond.com**
- ⚡ **openroadjourney.com**





CHAPTER 9:

Accidents and Your Rights

I've been practicing personal injury law in Alberta for almost 16 years now. The last thing I want to see someone in my office who's been injured in a motorcycle accident. If with this book I can help just one person avoid an accident, then I've accomplished what I wanted.

But accidents do happen, our best efforts to avoid them notwithstanding. So here are some tips if you find yourself involved in a crash:

1. Call 9-1-1. Alert the police. If someone's injured, request an ambulance. And if there's a fire or a chance that one might occur, request the fire department.
2. Wait for the police, ambulance or firefighters to arrive.
3. Get the names and contact information of the other drivers involved in the accident.
4. Get the names and numbers of independent witnesses.

5. Take photos of the scene and the vehicles.
6. Preserve evidence such as your bike, helmet and the clothes you were wearing.
7. Seek medical treatment if you've been injured. Go see your doctor or go to the hospital or a walk-in medical clinic. There are many of them in Calgary and Alberta. If the doctor recommends treatment, go for physiotherapy, treatment by a chiropractor or massage. Follow up with your insurance company. You're entitled to Section B benefits from your auto-motorcycle insurance company of up to \$50,000 for medical treatment. Not only do these benefits cover physiotherapy and chiropractic, but they also cover massage and acupuncture. Get the Section B forms from your insurance company and submit them within the requisite 30 day time period.
8. Contact any private medical benefit provider you may have, such as Great-West Life or Sun Life. Let them know that you've been injured in an accident so they can help you get the proper treatment and medication you need.
9. Call a lawyer if you decide to pursue a claim. He or she will advise you of

your legal rights. Make sure you get a lawyer who's familiar with motorcycle accidents. Not all accidents are the same. Often there are liability issues unique to motorcyclist accidents.

It's important to know that the lawyer representing you will spend the time and money to properly advocate for you. Get an experienced lawyer who knows your legal rights and knows how the court system works so you can get the compensation you deserve.

The types of compensation you can get in Alberta include:

- ⚡ General damages, which are awarded to compensate you for pain and suffering;
- ⚡ Loss of income, for missing time at work because of your injuries;
- ⚡ Loss of future income or loss of opportunity/earning capacity, for injuries expected to affect your ability to work in the future;
- ⚡ Special damages, for out-of-pocket expenses not reimbursed to you by your insurance company or private medical-protection plan;
- ⚡ Past and future loss of housekeeping, for impaired ability to do chores such as cooking, cleaning and laundry; and

- ⚡ Future costs of care, for not fully recovering from your injuries and subsequently receiving a doctor's recommendation of further treatment.

If you make an injury claim, you might not receive any compensation for two to three years. Be prepared for that, and be patient. My office isn't interested in quick settlements. We want you first to recover fully or as much as possible so that we can make sure you receive proper compensation under all these heads of damages.

Don't be intimidated by the process. It's normal to be nervous. But the legal system can work for you, and a good lawyer knows how to make it happen. Litigating a case is almost second nature to me. I've dealt with many clients and handled over 1,000 claims in my career.

The process involves opening a file. Your lawyer will direct you to seek compensation; to seek medical benefits through your own auto- or motorcycle-insurance company; and to seek treatment. The law firm will gather documents to support all your claims of damages, establishing a necessary paper trail. The burden is on you, the claimant, to prove to the court what you believe you're entitled to.

You must file a statement of claim within two years of an accident. Your lawyer then serves that statement on the defendant. "Defendant" is the legal term used to

refer to the person against whom you're making a claim. You're known as the plaintiff.

The defendant and his or her insurance company will defend themselves against the claim. The insurance company will hire a lawyer to represent them in this defense or use an in house lawyer.

After that comes a process that in Alberta is called “questioning” but that in the rest of Canada is referred to as an examination for discovery. At this stage, you'll have to answer questions from the defendant's lawyer. Meanwhile, your lawyer, if he knows what he's doing, will question the defendant to make sure no liability arguments can be raised later, during the settlement process.

Then there's the process of getting reports from medical and financial experts retained by the law firm to examine your injuries and examine your claims for loss of income or housekeeping—reports we can show the other side at time of settlement. (If the case goes to trial, which does not happen often, the experts who compiled these reports would be called to testify.)

In Alberta, only a judge hears most such cases; a jury trial is unusual. But you still need experts to prove your case. You need documents, too. And the process could take several years. So you need to retain a lawyer who has the time, resources and expertise to see your case through

to a satisfactory conclusion. Motorcycle accidents tend to be more complicated than automobile accidents.

If you have concerns about affording a lawyer, you should know that a personal injury lawyer will work on a contingency-fee basis. At our office, the standard contingency fee is 30 percent. That means we receive a little less than a third of the settlement, whatever it turns out to be, in exchange for representing you. And we pay all expenses, from expert fees (these payments are called disbursements; they come back to our firm on top of your settlement) to photocopying. You pay nothing out of pocket.

At my firm, we specialize in personal-injury claims. That's all we do. We don't represent insurance companies. We do personal-injury cases only. That's it.

Not only is personal injury law my area of interest and expertise, it's also my passion. I like making sure people who have been injured in an accident are reasonably compensated. They should be. Nobody asks to be in an accident. It's not a choice. Indeed, if you ask any of my clients whether they'd prefer never having been in an accident to being involved in one and subsequently receiving proper compensation, every one of them would say yes—they'd prefer never having been in an accident in the first place. They'd say no amount of money is enough to replace what they've lost or take away the suffering they've experienced.

Once, I took over a million-dollar brain-injury case from another lawyer, one who'd done little if anything beyond filing the claim and getting a statement from one of the witnesses. Because it was a new file, our office had to build it our way. And we won for that client. The man received a million dollar settlement.

To him that money meant nothing. His brain injuries left him with the mind of a child.

So had this man still been able to think and talk and behave like an adult, and had he the magical ability to turn back the clock and do everything over differently, I'm certain he would have returned all the settlement money in exchange for never being in that awful accident—for never offering to show visiting friends the beautiful countryside of Alberta; for never driving out to the prairies near the airport, with the Rocky Mountains to the west; for never thinking to turn left down that side road so they could see the sheep on a farm; and for never ending up in a ditch, bloody and vomiting violently.

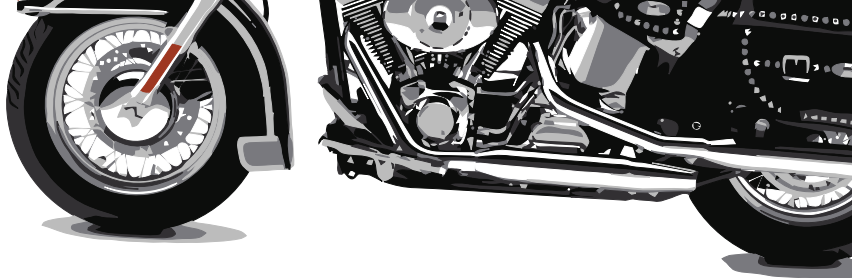
Why the insurance companies dragged that case on for eight years, I'll never understand.

My point, though, is this: I'd much rather never meet you at all than to meet you in my office because you've endured some traumatic event and need to file a personal-injury claim. After we represent a client, I tell him

or her, “I hope I never see you again.” Because while I’d welcome encountering that person at the shopping center or market, that last thing I want, for their sake, is to see them walk back into my office.

But if you need me, I’m here. And I want to help. You have a legal right in Alberta to seek compensation for your injuries. If you decide to exercise that right, you shouldn’t be ashamed to do so. Nor should you worry about the process and what it’s like. What you should do is receive proper compensation for your injuries and be put back in the same position as you were before the accident.

There’s no rocket science to litigation. It’s simply about not being intimidated by the insurance company and building a solid case. It’s like a house. You have to put the foundation down and build the frame and then put the roof on. The litigation process is like an earthquake: we make sure we build you a house strong enough to withstand it.



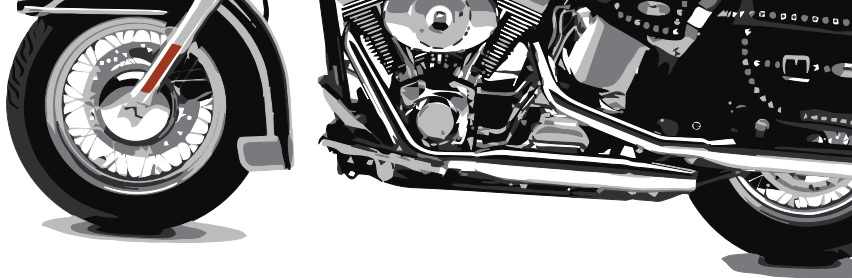
CONCLUSION

If you have any questions or concerns about motorcycles or how the legal process works with regard to accidents and personal injury cases feel free to email me or call my office. I'd be happy to answer your questions.

My firm specializes in motorcycle personal injury cases. We're here to educate and promote safety. So I hope this book has accomplished what I set out to accomplish: promoting safer roads for everyone. I also hope that it will make motorcyclists more responsible, better trained and equipped and happier.

I hope to see you on the roads.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alberta native Steve Grover, a veteran personal-injury lawyer with a practice in Calgary (groverlawfirm.com), is an avid motorcyclist who shares his passion for riding with family and friends.



As a lawyer, his special passion is motorcycle safety. He's an avid supporter of motorcycle education, the Too Cool Motorcycle School and the Calgary Safety Council.

Copies of his book are available for free distribution at motorcycle shows and other events. To be added to the mailing list for his firm's free newsletter, contact his office.

