

Never Drop Your Guard

by Trooper Jeff Sevigny, Washington State Patrol

Editor's note—FRICTION ZONE draws no conclusions and assumes no liability for conclusions drawn by the reader. This report may be graphic in nature and may not be suitable for all readers.

THIS COLLISION IS UNIQUE in the fact that the rider was not actually riding his bike when the crash occurred. It is a good reminder that even though the engine is not running, you may still be in harm's way.

Sequence

A Washington State Patrol (WSP) motorcycle officer had just made a traffic stop along a city arterial. Traffic was light to medium, the weather was clear, and the roadway was bare and dry. The arterial, which has one lane in each direction divided by a double yellow centerline, has a posted 35 mph speed limit. On each side of the roadway is a wide bike path divided by a solid white line. There are sidewalks on both sides of the road.

The trooper was standing off his motorcycle talking to the rider of a sportbike that he had just observed riding on one wheel down the arterial. The trooper's 2006 BMW 1200RT was parked on the bike path, well off the roadway, up against the sidewalk, five feet behind the violator's motorcycle.

The trooper was standing with his back to traffic as he spoke to the young man about his riding behavior when he noticed that the violator's eyes got very large all of a sudden (Scene 1). As the violator began to reach for the trooper and say something to warm him, the trooper instinctively took one step towards the sidewalk. At the same time a full-size pickup pulling a utility trailer struck the trooper's motorcycle (Scene 2). As the truck passed the trooper, the right mirror of the truck struck the his left elbow (Scene 3).

The pickup continued down the roadway several hundred feet before coming to a stop. The motorcycle was thrown down the road and sustained extensive damage. The trooper remained on his feet and radioed for assistance. Fortunately nobody was seriously injured.

Analysis

Troopers arrived on the scene and arrested the driver of the pick-

Being Aware Includes when You Are Off Your Bike

If you have to stop on the side of the road, try to park as far from the roadway as possible, and never turn your back to oncoming traffic. Drivers are easily distracted and they don't seem to realize how vulnerable a rider is. At night it is even more imperative that you keep aware of the traffic around you since it is more difficult for someone to identify a potential hazard (a stopped bike).

up for RCW 46.61.502, Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol:

(1) A person is guilty of driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or any drug if the person drives a vehicle within this state:

(a) And the person has, within two hours after driving, an alcohol concentration of 0.08 or higher as shown by analysis of the person's breath or blood made under RCW 46.61.506; or

(b) While the person is under the influence of or affected by intoxicating liquor or any drug; or

(c) While the person is under the combined influence of or affected by intoxicating liquor and any drug...

The rider of the sportbike was not injured and was released. The trooper was treated and release from a local hospital for minor shoulder/elbow pain.

The trooper was wearing a ballistic riding suit* while on duty. The emergency room doctor indicated that had the trooper not had the protection of the ballistic elbow pad, his elbow likely would have been shattered.

Opinion

This collision is a great reminder to all of us of the dangers present anywhere at any time. If you stop on the side of the road, always watch the traffic. The trooper in this case is lucky to be alive. If he had not taken that one step, things most certainly would have turned out very different. And had he not been wearing the proper riding gear, he may never have ridden again. Have a great holiday season. **FZ**

Enroll in a motorcycle safety course to learn the proper operation of a motorcycle before you ride or to brush up on your riding skills:

Arizona—www.msf-usa.org, 800.446.9227

California—www.ca-msp.org, 877.743.3411

Idaho—www.idabostar.org, 888.280.7827

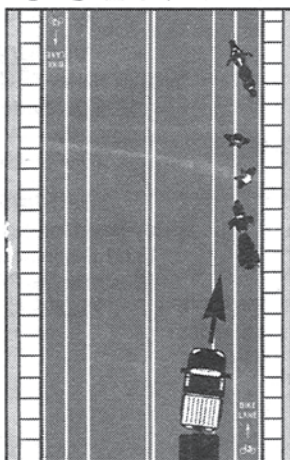
Nevada—www.nevadarider.com, 800.889.8779

Oregon—teamoregon.orst.edu/to_web/index.shtml, 800.545.9944

Utah—www.msf-usa.org, 800.446.9227

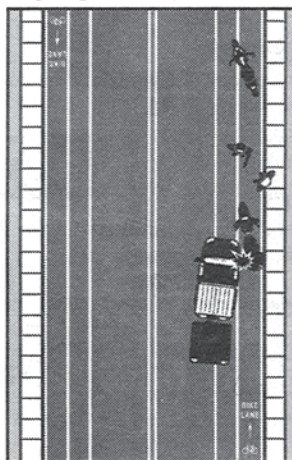
Washington—www.dol.wa.gov/ds/wmssite.htm, 800.446.9227.

SCENE 1



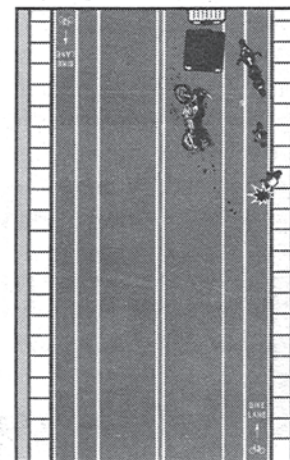
The Trooper stands with his back to traffic while speaking to the rider he pulled over. While he stands there, a truck pulling a trailer approaches him from behind.

SCENE 2



The truck strikes the trooper's motorcycle just as the trooper takes a step towards the sidewalk.

SCENE 3



As the truck passes the trooper, its mirror strikes the trooper's left elbow. The trooper's motorcycle is thrown down the road and sustains extensive damage.

*The trooper was wearing an Aerostich Police Suit.