

BLIND SPOTS

Mark Welch — Safety Officer

Blind spots – they are everywhere! With all the distractions a motorist has these days, it is hardly a surprise that so many people fail to check their blind spots before making lane changes. One does not have to look too far to see someone driving a car while talking on a cell phone, eating a sandwich, putting on makeup (women do it, too...) or even reading a book. Then when they notice that they need to change their course of travel, they do a quick check of the mirror and move over, sometimes without checking their blind spots.

If you have not already noticed, the major differences between a motorcycle and a car are stability and vulnerability. Think about this: the last time you were driving your car and you stopped at a red light, did you open your car door and put your foot on the ground? A motorcycle cannot stand up on its own when stopped without your assistance. (It's two tired. Pun intended.)

The vulnerability part makes us better car drivers because we ride motorcycles. Remember back before you discovered the joy of riding on two wheels? When you stopped at a red light and your light turned green, you probably immediately took your foot off the brake pedal and hit the accelerator. If someone ran into you, you were protected by the steel around you and had an airbag and safety belt to for additional protection. Since those benefits are not available on two wheels, given the same scenario, when the light turns green, you look to your left, then right, then left again to make certain no one is going to run the light before easing out the clutch and rolling on the throttle. After you have ridden a while, that habit carries over when you drive your car and you find yourself pausing to look to make certain no one is going to run the light before you cross the intersection.

Because we are so vulnerable, it is up to us to ride in a manner that reduces our risks. When it is necessary to enter into a car or trucks blind spot, do it with determination. Accelerate to past them and spend as little time as possible in their blind spot. On cars, that area is relatively small. On a semi-tractor trailer, there are blind spots everywhere. Big trucks have blind spots on both sides (the passenger side has a bigger blind spot than the driver's side.) There are blind spots behind them and in front of them. Even though big rigs have plenty

of mirrors to assist them, they cannot eliminate all the blind spots around them. So don't hang out alongside any vehicle in their blind spot. Adjust your speed up or down to position yourself to a place where the driver can see you. If you cannot see the driver in their rearview mirrors, then they cannot see you!

The first photo is from the driver's seat in a big rig and shows what can be seen in the rear view mirror. The second photo, from another angle, shows a motorcyclist in the blind spot.



You might not have thought of this, but your motorcycle has a blind spot. It is eliminated the same way a car driver eliminates his or her blind spot, by doing a head

check or looking over your shoulder in the direction you are moving. We do it on a motorcycle because we are vulnerable. Most drivers do their best to look for us before executing lane changes.



We need to watch out for those that don't watch out for us.

Mark