

More about the why and what of HighViz

Why Go High-Viz?

Ask any rider, and they will probably tell you their biggest safety concern is being cut off, run over, or otherwise violated by another driver in traffic. It's a constant, serious threat. Other drivers are the biggest wild card we face out there. All they have to do is make one little mistake, one moment of inattention, misjudge our speed and/or distance, and BAM! Your ride is over!

And there's absolutely nothing we can do about it. Right? Wrong!

As a rider, take control of your destiny by making yourself as visible (conspicuous) as possible. Doing so will reduce the number of surprises you face every day and help you avoid getting blindsided by someone else's last-minute decision.

So what does that mean? What do people say when they talk about visibility? "Wear brightly colored gear and position yourself so people can see you." Well, duh. "Gee, thanks, great, that's all I need to know...I guess." Unfortunately, this advice leaves an awful lot to the imagination.

But hopefully, not any more. In the next article we share 20 ways to be more visible in traffic. There's a little something for everyone.

Reasons other drivers do not see motorcyclists

Most riders would agree that their goal is to enjoy their bikes and make it home safely. Being HighViz will make that job easier. About half of all motorcycle crashes involve a collision with another vehicle. In many crashes, the driver never saw the motorcyclist - or didn't see him or her until it was too late. There are many reasons why other drivers do not see motorcyclists.

- Most car drivers aren't familiar with motorcycles, so they don't think to look for them in traffic.
- Motorcycle riders typically wear dark colors and can easily blend into the background and "disappear."
- Motorcycles are smaller than other vehicles, so they are more difficult to spot in traffic and can be hidden by other vehicles or roadside features.



- Daytime headlight use does not give motorcycle riders much of an advantage anymore, due to the widespread use of daytime running lights on cars.
- The smaller size and single headlight on the motorcycle makes it more difficult for other drivers to judge a rider's speed and distance.



As a rider, the burden is unfortunately on you to do something about being visible. We expect other drivers to watch out for motorcyclists in traffic, but because motorcycle riders are so vulnerable, they have the responsibility to make themselves as visible as possible. In a multi-vehicle crash, it's the rider's life-and-limb at stake, so it's the rider who must make the extra effort to stand out in traffic.



Fortunately, making yourself "HighViz" is relatively easy. There are lots of ways to get noticed in traffic. Most riders understand the concept of "conspicuity" even if they've never heard the word before. Conspicuity (con-spik-CUE-i-tee) is the ability of an object to draw attention to itself, even if nobody's actively searching for it.

Rider conspicuity, therefore, is the ability of a motorcyclist to draw attention to him or herself, even though other drivers may not be actively looking for them.

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