

Motorcycle Mentorship Module 18

Riding in Different Environments





Warning: Incorrect or inaccurate information could lead to tragic results on the road. If a question arises that is not covered in the guide and you don't know the answer from your own experience and training, simply state, "That is a great question, I'll get back to you with the answer."

Your Service Safety Center will help with these types of questions should they arise. Their numbers are as follows:

US Army Driving Directorate: **334.255.3039**

USMC Safety Division: **703.604.4459**

US Navy Shore Safety: **757.444.3520 x7165**

US Air Force Safety Center: **505.846.0728**

USCG Safety Division: **202.475.5206**



Preface

About: The Defense Safety Oversight Council (DSOC) Motorcycle Mentorship Modules are a set of thirty six (36) facilitation modules designed for the purpose of increasing rider knowledge on various aspects of riding and providing additional capability for self-policing within peer groups. The modules are intended as a mechanism to further decrease motorcycle related mishaps and fatalities within Department of Defense (DoD) by encouraging riders to talk, live, and think about the topic.

Using the Module: The module content enclosed is intended as a facilitation guide to assist you with discussing the topic. However, it is still critical to use your skills and talent to engage participants and develop “buy-in” on this subject from your group. To maximize this, motivate and moderate your participants, control the accuracy of participant feedback, and be mindful of their time.

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2	Facilitation Guide – A brief overview on conducting a facilitated discussion of a topic
3	Module Overview – This section provides the facilitator a synopsis of the topic, learning objectives, and the suggested environment, props, and handouts for conducting the module
4	Module Discussion Introduction – This section provides guidance to the facilitator in opening up the discussion and getting participants talking about the topic and their relevant experiences
4	Discussion Areas – This section provides various discussion topics, sample facilitation questions, and factual information for the facilitator to lead the discussion
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Facilitation Guide for DSOC Mentorship Modules

It is recommended that this Mentorship Module be conducted in a facilitation style. Using the information provided in this Mentorship Module, you, as the facilitator, will lead a discussion on the subject. *You should not be conducting a lecture!* The facilitator's role is to help with how the discussion is proceeding. Participants will have much more "buy in" and connectivity with the information if they have input. One of your roles as the facilitator is to control the accuracy of the input and control the time. From the Mentorship Module, generate questions which will lead to group discussion. The more you let the group participate, the more success you will have.

Competencies of a Facilitator:

- Prepare prior to the event
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to participate and help members to express themselves
- Ask rather than tell
- Honor the group, display respect for the members, and acknowledge participant contributions
- Ask for others' opinions
- Listen without interrupting
- Demonstrate professionalism and integrity

The key characteristic distinguishing facilitation from other types of leadership, like scripted training, is that the outcomes are never predetermined in a facilitative setting. Although the background information provided with this Module remains the same, the result will depend on the participants, the knowledge and experience they bring, and the information that they feel they need to take away. The group uses the activities provided by the facilitator to unlock expertise, ensure thorough discussion, stay focused and reach decisions that are better than those any individual could come up with alone.

At the beginning of each Mentorship Event, discuss why the participants are there and what they will receive as a result of participating. Adults have limited time and they want to know "What's in it for me?" A facilitator should make training fun. Encourage humor and laughter in your Mentorship Event.

Principles of Adult Learning:

- Adult Learners want material that is relevant to them. "What's in it for me?" "What will I get out of this that will make a difference to me?"
- Adult Learners come to training events with varying amounts of experience. They like to share their experiences. If you have minimal or no motorcycle experience, you can still draw from your group.
- Even if you have motorcycle experience, you should draw from your group because people tend to remember what "they" said longer than what you said. Information that they "own" is more valuable to them.
- Facilitators are not always subject matter experts; nor do they need to be. Facilitators may draw on the existing knowledge of the participants and the information provided in these Modules.

Section I: Module Overview

Time Frame: One 30-60 minute facilitator-led discussion

Level of Prior Knowledge: Participants should have basic to intermediate riding experience and familiarization with riding in different environments and in different riding situations.

Synopsis: This module will provide a basic overview of riding in different environments. First, emphasis is placed on riding in different hazardous conditions that participants have experienced or will encounter while on the road. These conditions include different road, traffic, and weather scenarios.

Second, this module specifically reviews and discusses different road surface conditions that riders might experience, such as dirt, sand, or gravel and the techniques used to minimize risk on these different surfaces.

Finally we discuss the impact weather conditions may have upon riding. Students should discuss their own experiences with regard to riding in various kinds of weather and share what has worked for them. Topics included in this area are, but not limited to, rain, snow, heat, cold and any other riding conditions that are

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will identify different riding environments, both hazardous and typical, such as intersections, rural and urban roadways, residential areas, and controlled access highways.
- Participants will share their different riding experiences, identify different environments, and explain how different situations affect riders and their motorcycles.
- Participants will present, in a group setting, the strategies that they have used to minimize their risks in different riding environments
- Participants will describe and explain use of tools, riding techniques, and strategies needed to ride safely during changing environments.

mentioned by participants.

Suggested Environment/Props/Handouts:

A classroom or an informal outdoor setting is suitable for this facilitated discussion.

Section II: Module Discussion

Introduction: Facilitate discussion: When you ride, as most of you know, you will experience many different riding environments. These conditions will vary from different weather scenarios to different traffic situations.

Open discussions with participant-focused activities and introductions. Activities should encourage participant interaction and develop camaraderie and peer-relatedness. Ask for and encourage participant sharing of experiences related to the module topic.

Sample questions may include:

- Describe different communities and traffic patterns and how the environment could affect you as a rider?
- How does your riding behavior change your risk exposure while in traffic?
- When was the last time you rode your bike in a new community or environment that caught you by surprise?

Suggested Discussion Areas:

Discussion Area 1: Weather

Facilitation Questions:

- How does severe weather affect the way you ride your motorcycle?
- How does riding in the rain differ from riding on a normal, dry day?
- What other kind of weather effects riding a motorcycle? Cold? Hot? High wind?
- How do you deal with these differing conditions?
- If you do not have the right gear, such as a rain suit, what do you often think about when you are riding? What can you do to reduce this distraction?
- What are you not thinking about when you are thinking about being wet and cold? What about when you are hot?

Facilitator Notes:

Motorcycles can be a fun and affordable form of transportation. However, they can also be downright hazardous under adverse weather conditions.

If you're a fairly inexperienced rider, the best way to reduce your risk factors is to avoid riding your motorcycle when it's raining, too hot, or excessively cold. Listen to your local weather forecast before riding. If rain seems likely or extreme temperatures are predicted, consider using a different form of transportation or postponing your trip.

Proper riding gear can make a big difference in a riders comfort and fatigue levels. An uncomfortable rider, who is wishing they had a rain suit or a warmer jacket, is a rider who is not as focused on potential hazards in their immediate surroundings as they should be.

Rain, Wind and Hail

If you have to venture out in poor weather such as high winds, heavy rains (or both), or you find yourself unexpectedly riding through other less-than-ideal conditions, remember the following safety tips:

- Take a short break at least once every hour or two. Fatigue contributes to many motorcycle accidents.
- In high winds, ‘leaning into’ the wind helps but gusts can make this a stressful undertaking if it goes on for longer periods.
- Wear the right riding gear for the conditions!
- Rain reduces traction and visibility. Riding in the track of a vehicle in front of you can provide a bit more traction. Conversely, when riding on older paved surfaces where vehicles have worn two ruts, avoid riding in the ruts because standing water accumulates there, increasing the likelihood of hydroplaning (water between the tire and the road). If on a long trip and a sudden down pour occurs try sitting it out under an overpass or if available a building canopy.
- Hail can occur anytime of the year, but is more prevalent during the spring and fall. If a sudden storm comes up seek shelter immediately. Thunderstorms often produce hail which can be very dangerous for a motorcycle rider.
- If visibility is poor, slow down. Make sure you are riding at a speed that allows you to stop in the distance that you can see. It may take you longer to arrive at your destination, but a late arrival is still preferable to an emergency room visit or worse.
- If you’re in the middle of a long trip, consider renting a hotel room for the night. Operating a motorcycle at night can be difficult even under normal weather conditions.

When you’re driving in your car or truck, you’re protected from the rain. When you’re riding a motorcycle, you’re exposed to the elements. However, motorcycles do offer some advantages in wet weather. They provide a superior view of the road, easy maneuverability, and more escape routes from potentially dangerous situations.

Hot Weather

It’s a proven scientific fact that your physical condition affects your ability to react to dangerous situations. Most riders know that you’re more likely to be involved in a motorcycle accident when you’re tired, angry, or exhausted. However, few realize the impact excessive heat can have on your safety.

When you’re riding your motorcycle on a hot summer day, the best safety precaution you can take is to stay hydrated. Take plenty of water breaks. If you don’t like the taste of water, drink sports drinks instead. You should avoid soda whenever possible. The caffeine and sugar will add to dehydration.

Dressing appropriately can keep you comfortable on a hot day. However, it’s not a good idea to ride your motorcycle in shorts and no shirt. Keep as much of your body covered as possible. Skin exposed directly to the sun will evaporate water significantly faster than skin that is properly covered. Plus, overexposure increases your risk of sunburn. Modern vented/mesh riding gear allows air flow while protecting you from the sun.

Another easy tip to keep you comfortable on a hot day is to open the vents on your motorcycle helmet and jacket to increase air flow. Remember to bring along some extra lip balm, since the additional air will dry out your lips, and use sunscreen on all exposed skin.

If you're riding on a hot day, watch for signs of heat related injuries. Heat exhaustion, heat stroke, or heat cramps can happen to anyone. Alcoholics, older people, the obese, and those taking certain prescription medications are at an increased risk.

Cold Weather

To the casual observer, riding a motorcycle seems like an activity best left to warm days. However, the enthusiastic rider will often want to venture outside under colder conditions.

Dressing appropriately is the best way to keep yourself safe while riding your motorcycle in cold weather. Remember the following tips as you're selecting your motorcycle apparel:

- Keep your hands and feet warm. Invest in a good pair of gloves and some high-quality motorcycle boots.
- Keep your torso warm. If the "core" of your body is cold, it will restrict blood flow to your hands and feet.
- Wind-proof your body. Make sure the outside layer of your outfit is made of a material that will stop the wind.
- Seal the openings in your outfit. Don't let air come in through the neck opening in your jacket, the sleeves of your shirt, or the bottom of your pants.

Choose a good insulating material. Wool is the best natural fiber insulating material, but synthetics such as Thinsulate work well also.

If your bike allows it, you may also want to consider installing a windshield. If you plan to ride in cold weather on a regular basis, a windshield will keep you warmer than if you simply dress in appropriate motorcycle apparel. Heated riding gear is also available. Heated gloves and a heated vest can make a cold ride much more comfortable.

While riding your motorcycle in cold weather, it's wise to watch for signs of hypothermia or frostbite. If you start to feel uncomfortable, stop your bike and take a break. If the condition persists, seek medical attention.

Discussion Area 2: Riding on the Road

Facilitation Questions:

- How does traffic affect you as a motorcyclist?
- How does traffic affect your motorcycle riding behaviors and strategies?
- How does riding a motorcycle in a big city differ from a small town?
- What are some concerns for riding in rural areas?
- Are residential areas different from rural?
- Should motorcyclists be wary of construction zones? What should we watch for?
- What are some things to be alert for when interacting with other vehicles in traffic?
- What does the term “safety margin” mean to you, have you heard that before? How do you apply that on the road and in traffic?
- What benefit does an increased safety margin provide?

Facilitator Notes:

There are few pleasures on the road equal to riding a motorcycle. The idea of being out on the open, scenic roads alone or even with a group of like-minded riders conjures up images of perfection. But with every good thing on a motorcycle there always tends to be an opposite danger involved.

Getting to those lonesome roads in the middle of nowhere usually means having to endure a bit of congestion first. Heavy traffic is an extra hindrance for motorcyclists and presents dangers and obstacles that require premium skills and hyper-awareness.

Never expect other drivers to be on the lookout for you. If you expect those insulated in their mammoth vehicles to be on the watch for two-wheeled speedsters, then you may be in line for an accident. You need to be in complete control, not only of your bike, but also of the street (through keen observation and prediction), and of your mental state.

If you just saddled up and hit the road after an argument with your spouse or boss, you can bet you will not be at your best emotionally. Your emotional state has a direct effect on your overall mental processing. You are automatically creating a hazardous condition because you are sacrificing an element of control. The stakes are high in heavy traffic and you have to use your size and vision to compensate. They are your allies, and hindering them by not being as sharp as you should only means you increase the possibilities of making a mistake.

Safety Margin

The best way to assume control riding on the motorcycle is to create space—improving your safety margin. Much like a football running back attempts to find gaps that increase the field of vision; you will have much more success maneuvering in traffic if you have some breathing room. These gaps may be essential for quick reaction and narrow escapes, but they are also important to observing the whole road in front of you. The more you see, the more information you have so you can predict the actions of others.

If you are riding two feet off the bumper of a Hummer with tinted windows, odds are you will not see much besides the license plate and paint job dings. If the driver of the Hummer slams on the brakes your

options will be completely cut off because, you could not predict what was happening up the road (or even see it); the consequences will not be good even with the swiftest reaction.

Even in the heaviest traffic (think LA or DC), try to keep around two to four seconds of distance between you and the car in front. How do you measure time? Pick out an object ahead, such as a light pole or painted line on the road and count seconds from when the vehicle ahead of you passes it until you pass the same object. Count one thousand and one, one thousand and two, etc. Pretty much anything with 5 syllables will do. If you are in stop and go traffic or only moving around 10 miles per hour (mph), then a car length or two will suffice. But once the traffic gets back up to speed then you should consider allowing back four seconds or more of safety margin.

Lane Positioning

A single lane is divided into three riding areas: right side, center, and left side. Obviously a road can have many varying scenarios and a rider's positioning will essentially depend on that. Lane position should never be predetermined and must be based on which position is safer at that moment.

However, if you are on a major highway with four to six lanes in one direction, the center is most likely the last place you want to be in traffic. Most riders are taught to slice and dice to the far left lane (minimize obstructions to one side completely) and then ride in the right side of that lane. Some riders will stay one lane from the left, but ride in the far left of said lane.

Of course, if you are in city traffic, the left lane may be a real hindrance because of left turning vehicles, so opting for the center lane may be the best option. It really just depends where you feel comfortable, while at the same time keeping control and maintaining good distance.

Rural Areas

Riding in rural areas can be thrilling. There is the fresh air, the lovely landscapes, and the freedom of zipping along open roads. However, remember that many animals also call these regions their home. Thus, be wary of any scurrying possums or leaping deer, as you speed down the road. These animals have been here eons before us, so we ought to live in harmony with them.

Most riders believe that it is car drivers who are at fault in most collisions with motorcyclists. This is a reason why many motorcyclist rights organizations support increased penalties for motorists who violate motorcyclist's right-of-way. But here's something you may not be aware of: more than half of motorcycle mishaps, in rural areas, are single-vehicle crashes. There were no cars involved in these mishaps, which is why they are called single-vehicle crashes. Motorcyclists must recognize this serious problem and try to figure out how to minimize the risks.

Most of these crashes involve riders losing control, leaving the roadway, and crashing. What possible explanations are there for these wrecks? For one thing, half of these wrecks involve alcohol. Cut your risk in half by riding straight – respect yourself. Alcohol was not involved in the other half of these single vehicle mishaps, so there are still some other things going on. Most of these crashes happen on curves. Often a rider will leave the road and hit a pole, the only nearby fixed object. What seems to happen is that a rider focuses his attention on the object that scares him, and he winds up running straight into it—rider target fixation is suspected as a contributing factor to the crash. Panic probably played a role in this, too. There is a tendency to go where you look, so look out ahead, around the curve. Look where you want to go.

Rural roads are often used by heavy farm equipment and traffic is generally lighter than urban areas. Road debris such as sand, dirt, harvested grains which produce slippery conditions. Roadway maintenance and sweeping is less prevalent in rural areas or non-existent. Potholes pose a significant hazard to motorcyclists and some rural areas use pea gravel aggregate and tar when resurfacing asphalt roadways—this creates a

condition wherein the entire road becomes debris. Rural roadways typically have more wild life crossings and the potential of a rider impacting wildlife is significant, particularly at dusk or dawn, and throughout the night. Some rural roadways have little to no shoulder areas and the roadways appear narrow or offer little margin between the road and unpaved edge.

Residential Areas

Riding in residential areas both in urban and rural areas pose unique riding hazards. In addition to the road and roadway user hazards, residential areas are filled with pedestrian and domestic animal traffic. Although some motorists feel the roadway is exclusively for vehicle users, all public roadways are legally accessible to many other legitimate roadway users such as bicyclists, crossing pedestrians (including children, hearing and visually impaired residents), horses and riders, and motor-driven cycles. Speeds in residential areas are generally low but it is the concentration of other roadway users that increase the collision potential of riders traveling through residential areas. Riders must also remember, despite pet control laws, pets often escape the confines of yards and homes.

Construction Zones

Construction zones pose unique hazards to all roadway users—particularly the motorcyclist. Heavy construction can include deep trenching, very slippery metal plates, uneven road surface, and large amounts of roadway debris. Traffic is typically re-routed or disrupted and often lanes are completely closed to one lane of use for both directions. Flaggers and construction workers receive limited training in communicating with the traffic mix and can convey confusing or incorrect instructions—does his signal mean go or stop?

Interaction With Other Vehicles

The “No-Zone” represents the danger areas around trucks and buses where crashes are more likely to occur. Some No-Zones are actual blind spots or areas around trucks and buses where your motorcycle “disappears” from the view of the drivers. These blind spots are the Side No-Zone, Rear No-Zone, and Front No-Zone areas. The right-side blind spot is doubly dangerous because trucks and buses make wide right turns. Knowing the No-Zones can save your life.

Don’t “hang out” on either side of trucks or buses. Trucks and buses have big No-Zones (blind spots) on both sides. They’re much larger than your car’s blind spots. If you can’t see the driver’s face in the side-view mirror, the driver can’t see you. If that driver needs to swerve or change lanes for any reason, you’re in big trouble.

Avoid Tailgating. Unlike cars, trucks and buses have huge No-Zones directly behind them. The truck or bus driver can’t see your motorcycle there, and you can’t see what’s going on ahead of you. If the truck or bus driver brakes or stops suddenly, you have no place to go and could end up running into them.

Pay closer attention and never cross behind a truck that is backing up. Hundreds of motorists and pedestrians are killed or injured, each year, by ignoring trucks backing up. Truck drivers have rear-view mirrors but their ability to see directly behind them is limited to non-existent and they may not see you cutting in behind them.

Pass safely – you could get “rear-ended” by a truck or bus if you “cut-in front” too soon after passing, then immediately slow down. If you do this, truck and bus drivers are forced to slam on their brakes. They need nearly twice the time and room to stop as cars and may not be able to do so in time. When passing, look for the whole front of the truck in your rear-view mirror before pulling in front, and make sure to maintain your speed. Avoid the “Squeeze Play” – truck and bus drivers sometimes need to swing wide to the left in order to safely make a right turn. They can’t see cars directly behind or beside them. Trying to “squeeze” in between the commercial vehicle and the curb is an invitation for disaster.

Discussion Area 3: Road Surfaces

Facilitation Questions:

- How does weather effect road surfaces?
- What different road conditions did you experience on your last ride?
- Do road surface conditions road change from season to season?
- Fall is a great time to ride, how do leaves on the road effect the road surface?
- What about sand and gravel? Where do you find a lot of sand, rocks and gravel?
- How does traction differ from a dry surface to a wet surface?

Facilitator Notes:

Road surface characteristics change based on weather, temperature, and local conditions. Consider a typical asphalt road; the sustained ambient temperature can significantly change the road surface. In summer, or hot areas such as the southwest, roads can flow or ooze tar and petroleum distillates—creating very slippery surface areas. During autumn, falling leaves can produce very slippery surfaces. In winter icy roadways are hazardous and freezing areas/patches of the road that are pushed upward known as frost heave.

Roadways near sandy or beach areas are often covered with sand—this is also typical of the low lying coastal areas or in the deserts. Some roads are made of coral aggregate and the road oozes a very slippery substance during rainfall. Riding on Guam near beaches and while raining results in a near impossible riding condition with the oozing coral slime and sandy road conditions.

Even though a motorcycle still has substantial traction in the wet, traction is reduced by 20% or more during rainfall. Ability to accelerate, turn and brake are all compromised when riding on wet surfaces.

Wrap-Up:

Brief or discuss the following:

Riding in different environments requires a lot of thought to what? What do you need to be prepared? Do you need any mental preparedness? What do you need? Review and discuss as lead by students.

Suggested Wrap-Up Discussion:

- Ask participants how they would apply the knowledge they gained from this discussion to their ride home or their next ride with friends.
- What opinions or preconceptions about riding in various environments have changed?

Distribute copies of the DSOC Motorcycle Mentorship Module Evaluation form to all participants and request that they deliver or mail the completed form to the Command or Command Safety Office for processing.

Remind everyone to ride safe, and see you at the next Mentorship Meeting.

DSOC Motorcycle Mentorship Feedback Form

Presenter Name:

Date:

Topic/Title:

Unit Number:

Please review each statement below and check the response that closely matches your experience in the Mentorship Module today:

1. Please rate the presenter's performance:

Prepared Not Prepared Engaging Not Engaging Led Discussion Lectured

Comments:

2. I was given opportunities to participate in the module's discussion

Never Only Once 2-4 Times Many Times Throughout Discussion

Comments:

3. With regard to my personal riding experiences, this discussion was:

Relevant Not Relevant Interesting Not Interesting

Comments:

4. This discussion topic has provided me with specific learning points that I can use to be a safer, better informed rider

None One Idea or Fact 2-4 Learning Points 5 or More

Comments:

5. I would be interested in participating in other Motorcycle Mentorship Module discussion topics

Never Again Willing to Try Another Module Would Like to Do Modules Regularly

Comments:

Thank you for your participation. Please make note of any other suggestions or comments below (continue on the back if needed):

Deliver or mail this completed form to the Command or Command Safety Office for processing. Please do not return this form directly to the Module Presenter.

Resources

Continued Reading:

Bohner, G.; Wanke, M. (2002). *Attitudes and Attitude Change*, East Sussex UK: Psychology Press

Motorcycle Safety Foundation, (2005). *The Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Guide to Motorcycling Excellence*, 2nd Edition. Irvine CA: Whitehorse Press

Parks, L. (2003). *Total Control*. St. Paul MN: MBI Publishing Co.

Spiegel, B. (2010). *The Upper Half of the Motorcycle*. Stuttgart, Germany: Whitehorse Press

Internet Sites:

5 Huge Safety Tips for Motorcycle Road Trips
<http://ezinearticles.com/?5-Huge-Safety-Tips-For-Motorcycle-Road-Trips&id=1645649>

Motorcycles and Weather conditions,
<http://www.dmv.org/how-to-guides/motorcycle-weather-conditions.php>

Rural Bike Wrecks,
<http://www.abateny.org/safe/rural.html>

What is the No-Zone?
<http://www.sharetheroadsafely.org/nozone/whatIsTheNoZone.asp>

Definitions: (As defined for purposes of this module.)

None — this module is non-technical and is designed for delivery in lay-person terms.





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Some of the principal contributors to this effort include the following:

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