

Here's Trouble



Be prepared if something goes wrong

Trouble comes in many forms. Things can happen quickly on the road, and you need to be ready to respond rapidly to a variety of emergency situations.

You also need to think about ways to stop the thieves who may be out to steal your bike!

What is an emergency?



An example of countersteering at low speed during training.

When something goes wrong on the road, you may have an emergency on your hands. If you're ready for it, you won't necessarily have a crash. You can prepare yourself for emergencies, and learn to cope with them. The key things are anticipation and practice.

Anticipation will become easier with time, but that is all the more reason to be very aware of it when you start out. Keep in mind the many potential dangers outlined in this book.

Also you need to find yourself a quiet place with no traffic and invest some time in practice. It will pay off every time you ride.

Emergency braking

Emergency braking is the most important control skill needed to avoid a crash. It needs a great deal of practice to do well. The quickest way to stop a motorcycle is to:

- make sure you are upright and travelling in a straight line
- close the throttle
- apply both brakes, using four fingers on the front brake lever
- pull in the clutch just before you stop.

Be careful not to lock up the wheels, because there is a good chance you will crash if you do. Should either wheel lock up and start to slide, release that brake and apply it again immediately but not quite so firmly.

Your bike may have anti-lock braking (ABS) which will prevent the wheels locking up. Try to ride as if the ABS isn't there; it is intended to take over only in extreme circumstances.

Braking through curves is a special case because the tyres are already using a lot of the available traction for cornering. If you brake too hard while leaning over, there is a good chance that you will fall over. The best thing to do is to complete your braking before you start to lean, but in an emergency that may not be possible.

There are two ways of braking while you are actually in a corner. The first is the simplest - just brake as you normally would, only more gently. You can continue around the corner, although the bike may want to 'stand upright' and go straight ahead. This way will not allow you to stop quickly. The other

way means standing the bike up straight so it is travelling in a straight line, and applying the brakes as you would for any emergency stop. This will stop you quickly, but will take you out of your line of travel. Be careful that you don't run off the road or into the path of other traffic.

Skidding

A skid tends to happen very quickly and can be extremely dangerous, so it's important to know how to control it. Here are some points to keep in mind:

- The most common cause of skidding is locking up one or both wheels while braking.
- The front wheel is most likely to skid when you brake too sharply or quickly. If this happens, release the front brake and immediately apply it again more gently.
- The rear wheel may skid because you have accelerated or braked too quickly or while turning. Ease off the throttle if acceleration was the problem. If it was braking, steer into the direction of the skid and release the rear brake when the bike is travelling in a straight line again.
- If the bike skids for any reason, keep your feet on the footpegs while you deal with it. This will give you much better control than putting your feet down.

See the diagram on the next page.



Skidding



If your rear wheel skids, steer into the skid and ease off the rear brake when the bike is travelling in a straight line again.

Swerving

There is a quick way to swerve around an obstacle, called countersteering. It's very effective, but it definitely takes practice. This is how to do it:

- To swerve quickly to the right, turn your head to the right, look where you want to go and press forward on the right handgrip.
- As you pass the obstacle, press forward on the left handgrip and look left. The bike will straighten up again.
- If at all possible you should stay in your own lane when you do this, so don't run wider than necessary. Changing lanes can be dangerous unless you can check that there are no vehicles in the lane you are entering.
- Reverse this process to swerve to the left, but no matter which way you swerve, do not brake at the same time or you could crash.

See the diagram on the next page.

Practice countersteering and you will find that it is a very useful skill to have. An Accredited Motorcycle Trainer will help you learn to use countersteering to swerve around an obstacle.

Countersteering

Countersteering is the only way to swerve quickly around an object.



Over the top

Sometimes you may have to ride over a small object or through a pothole that's in your way. If the obstacle is flat, like a sheet of cardboard or metal, ride straight over the top and do not brake. If it is bulkier, treat it the same as for a bit of rough road. Here are a few tips:

- If possible, brake before you reach the object, but release the brake before you hit it.
- Hold the handgrips firmly but don't grasp them too hard.
- Keep the bike in a straight line. This makes it less likely that you'll fall over.
- Stop afterwards and check tyres and wheels for damage.

One in the eye

One very good reason for wearing a visor or a good pair of goggles is eye protection. On a bike you will be hit by things like insects and gravel. A visor or goggles will keep them out of your eyes.

If you do get something in your eye, don't rub it or try to get it out immediately. Keep your hands on the bars, try to keep the edge of the road in view, slow down gently and pull off the road. Then try to remove the object from your eye.



The Ride On video has very useful information about countersteering. The video is available from the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, Tel: 1800 621 372.



Animal warning

Animals are a difficult problem because they are unpredictable. You should always try to avoid hitting them, but don't leave your lane or run off the road to avoid a small animal. You have a much better chance of surviving an impact with a small animal than with another vehicle or a roadside pole.

Don't try to kick dogs even if they are chasing you. Slow down as you approach them. Be careful that they don't run under your front wheel. Then speed up a little when you are past them. They will usually lose interest quickly.

Wildlife is even less predictable. Be especially careful at dusk or at night on country roads, because that's when many animals may be around - but keep them in mind at any time. The only thing that helps is riding really slowly and carefully, because animals like kangaroos and emus can seem to come out of nowhere.



Blowout

A blowout is a quick puncture. It will usually be caused by a sharp object such as a nail. Replacing your tyres before they become too worn is the best protection against blowouts. Not running over things like timber boards on the road is also important.

If the front tyre goes flat, the front of the bike will flop from side to side rapidly and it will be harder to steer. If the rear tyre goes flat, the back of the bike will slide from side to side. The faster you are going the more likely it is that you will lose control and crash. In any case you will need to react quickly.

- Hold the handgrips firmly and concentrate on steering. Keep your feet on the footpegs and try to keep going in a straight line.
- Do not use the brakes, especially on the wheel with the flat tyre.
- If the front tyre is flat, shift your weight as far back as you can to take the load off it. If it's the rear tyre, sit forward on the bike, and pull in the clutch.
- Close the throttle gradually to slow down.
- Once you have slowed, pull off the road and coast to a stop.



Checking your tyre pressures and the condition of the tyres frequently will help to prevent flats.

Mechanical problems

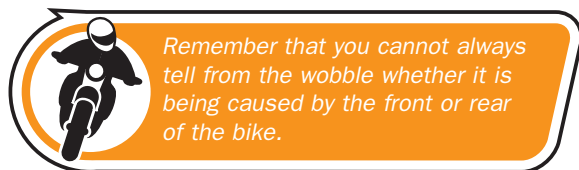
Bikes can cause emergencies, especially if they are not well looked after.

Wobble

Your bike may begin to wobble or shake from side to side at high speed. Apart from a flat tyre, this could be caused by:

- a heavy load, unevenly distributed
- a wheel that is bent or out of alignment
- poorly tightened or worn bearings in the steering head or swingarm
- a windshield or fairing that has not been fitted properly
- loose wheel bearings or spokes
- unsuitable or worn tyres.

If you experience a wobble make sure you apply both brakes carefully and slow down gradually. Carefully pull off the road. Work out what was causing the wobble and correct the problem before you continue.



Broken chain

You'll definitely know when this happens, because there will be a huge bang from the back of the bike and it will then either freewheel because there is no more drive to the rear wheel or skid because the rear wheel is locked up. Look after your chain, keep it properly tensioned and lubricated; replace it and the sprockets when they are worn.

If your chain does break, and does not lock up the back wheel:

- close the throttle
- brake to a stop.

If it does lock up the wheel, treat this the same way as a rear wheel skid – don't brake and steer into the skid.

Stuck throttle

If you don't maintain your throttle cable properly, or sometimes if there is wear in the carburettor, your throttle may stick while it is on. You will not be able to slow the engine. If this happens:

- pull in the clutch
- brake gently to a stop and pull off the road
- turn off the ignition.

Seized engine

Although it is more common in two-stroke engines, seizure does happen in four-strokes as well. The symptoms are the same as for a locked-up rear wheel, but the problem is easier to overcome. If it happens:

- pull in the clutch immediately



- brake gently to a stop and pull off the road
- turn off the ignition.

Let the engine cool down and add oil or coolant if either is low. The engine may start again, but it should be checked for damage.

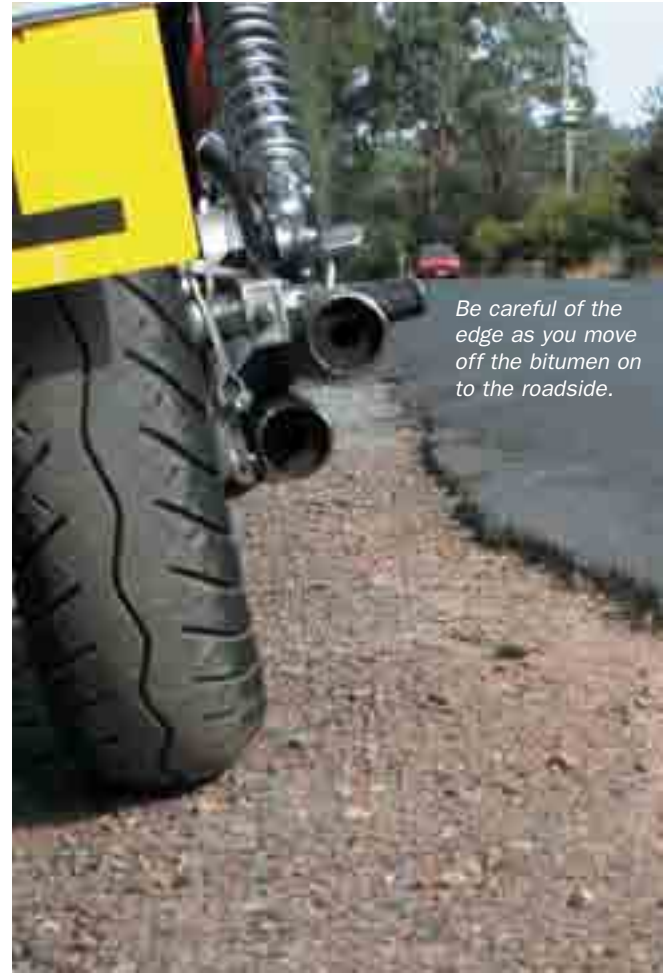
Pulling off the road

If you have to leave the road to check or fix your bike, remember to:

- Check the roadside surface before you ride on it. Try not to pull off into mud or deep sand, and be careful of the edge as you move off the bitumen on to the roadside.
- Check your mirrors, do a headcheck and give a clear signal to let other road users know what you are doing.
- Stop well away from the road. A bike by the roadside can be hard to see. You might be hit by a car if you are too close to the road.

Dealing with a crash

If you are involved in a crash there are certain things you must do. The *Road to Solo Driving* details your responsibilities and also has good advice on some basic first aid. Remember if you need to call an ambulance, police or fire brigade, phone 000.



Be careful of the edge as you move off the bitumen on to the roadside.

Check your understanding

Answers to these review questions are upside down at the bottom of this page.

1. If you need to stop quickly in an emergency, you should:

- A apply the front brake only
- B apply both brakes together
- C open the throttle

2. If you press forward on the left handgrip when riding, the motorcycle will:

- A lean to the right
- B lean to the left
- C not change its lean

3. The chain on Tam's motorcycle breaks, but the back wheel does not lock up. He should:

- A release the brakes quickly
- B apply the front brake harder
- C close the throttle and brake to a stop

4. Kim is riding along and the bike becomes hard to steer because her front tyre has gone flat. She should:

- A apply the brakes quickly
- B shift her weight far back on the seat, ease off the throttle and come to a stop
- C open the throttle and speed up to relieve the effect

5. You are riding along a freeway at 80 km/h. The front wheel begins to wobble. You should:

- A firmly grip the handgrips and accelerate out of the wobble
- B firmly grip the handgrips and apply the brakes quickly to make the shaking stop
- C don't fight the wobble, but gradually slow down and carefully pull off the road

ANSWERS 1B 2B 3C 4B 5C





For additional security use an extra locking device.

Bikes are very easy to steal; they can just be picked up and moved. Less than a third of stolen bikes are recovered. It makes sense to be especially careful.

Protect the bike itself

- Make your bike as hard to steal as possible by always locking it.
- Fit an engine immobiliser if it doesn't already have one.
- Keep your keys safe!

Security at home

- Park your bike in a locked garage if you can, and lock it to something solid.
- Don't leave the keys with the bike even when it is in the garage.

Security on the road

- Try to park where you can see the bike, lock it, remove the keys and use some sort of locking device, such as a chain (choose one that is not easily cut) and a strong padlock.
- Lock it to something solid if you can; remember, thieves can lift even big bikes and carry them away.
- Don't leave valuables on your bike, such as in a bag or pannier.



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VicRoads Customer Service Centres are open 8.30am – 4.30pm Monday to Thursday and to 5.00pm on Friday (except for the Melton and Sunbury offices that close at 4.30pm on Friday).

For further information:

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- for hearing impaired
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