



Making Sure Are Worth

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As a certified motorcycle-safety instructor and avid motorcyclist, I'm well aware of the concepts of risk management. At least once a week, someone asks me when I'm going to give up riding "that death machine" or some similar euphemism. My standard answer is that I'm not going to give it up.

Risks are present in every aspect of our life. It's impossible to get rid of them. The best we can do is to know the ones we face and implement measures to manage them. I'm not saying that every risk is worth taking; sometimes we need to avoid it completely. In my case,

I've decided that the risks related to riding a motorcycle are manageable and are worth taking to gain the pleasure I get from riding.

One concept taught during the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Motorcycle Rider course is SIPDE, which stands for **S**earch, **I**dentify, **P**redict, **D**ecide, **E**xecute. In short, it's a process to help riders deal with the risks of riding. We do the decide and execute portions on a daily basis. When something happens in front of you as you're riding, you decide what to do about it and execute that decision. This reactive process is not conducive to a long and prosperous life.

How many times have you heard someone say you should be proactive? The proactive portions of SIPDE are search, identify and predict.

The author enjoys a ride on his motorcycle. He admits he should be wearing a reflective safety vest.

Risks Taking

We must learn and integrate these portions into our daily lives.

For example, I was riding my motorcycle to work one day when I found myself behind a dilapidated pickup truck. As I rode along, my mind automatically was going through the SIPDE process. I remember thinking, "What will I do if something falls off that truck?"

I had searched the scene ahead of me and identified the possibility that the old pickup might pose a hazard. I predicted that something could fall off the truck into my path. I made a decision to check my following distance and determined it was sufficient to react to an incident. Although I decided I didn't need to execute anything else at that moment, my mind kept going through the SIPDE process, looking for other hazards.

About two minutes later, the truck hit a bump in the road, and the tailgate fell into the road. Even though I had predicted that event could happen, I still was surprised by it. Because I had predicted the event and checked my following distance, however, I was able to predict the tailgate's movement and swerved to the right. I then continued on my path without a problem.

The Navy has identified a process called operational risk management (ORM), which includes these five steps: Identify hazards, assess hazards, make risk decisions, implement controls, and supervise. SIPDE simply is these steps applied directly to a driving situation. ORM is a simple process, but it works when you use it. You have to make a conscious decision to use it all the time.

When I first learned about SIPDE five years ago, I had to make myself use it every time I rode my motorcycle or drove my car. Now, it's second nature to me. ■

When the author wrote this article, he was the ROICC at Great Lakes, Ill.

As I read this account, I was reminded of an incident that happened to me about seven years ago. I was headed out of town on a bass-fishing trip when I got behind a pickup truck with a loose doghouse in the bed. For several miles, I watched the doghouse move around and rise up occasionally as a wind gust got under it, so I knew a hazard existed. Unlike the author, though, I didn't consider my possible evasive actions.

Suddenly, the doghouse blew out of the bed and started twisting and turning down the interstate, straight at me. The next few moments seemed like an eternity as I fought my brakes and a boat trailer that kept trying to turn sideways. I also had to worry what was going to happen with the tractor-trailer behind me. A glance in my rearview mirror showed a lot of smoke pouring off his tires.

When the doghouse, my car and trailer, and the tractor-trailer all came to a stop, I could see the hood ornament on the tractor—a bulldog. I couldn't help chuckling a little as I thought about the idea of being trapped between a bulldog and a runaway doghouse—Ed.