

# Riding “High on th

By ITC(SW/AW) Wayne Katz,  
USS *Crommelin* (FFG-37)

With the number of motorcycle accidents on the rise Navywide, Navy leadership has sharpened its focus on motorcycle safety to reverse this trend. The Navy probably would prefer just to forbid the use of motorcycles altogether, but everyone knows that idea is impractical.

Safety stand-downs, page 13 entries, captain’s calls, and motorcycle-safety-awareness training are all measures that commands use to promote safe-riding practices. While these measures are helping, Sailors from Pearl Harbor wanted to do more.

In July 2004, following the lead of USS *Paul Hamilton* (DDG-60), the crew of USS *Crommelin* (FFG-37) established its own motorcycle safety club. The goal of this club is to promote safe-riding practices and behavior through the camaraderie of those who enjoy riding.

For the most part, motorcycle-safety guidance is promulgated by those who don’t even ride. We thought it might be more effective if riders got together and talked about the importance of personal protective equipment (PPE) and riding and traffic safety from the perspective of those who actually own and ride motorcycles.

“When I was younger, I always wanted to ride motorcycles; it looked like a lot of fun,” said Ltjg. Matthew Bullock, *Crommelin*’s navigator. “Now that I am older, I finally have the opportunity, and I really enjoy it.”

When *Crommelin* riders were asked why they ride, the reasons were quite similar. Here were some of the responses: “It’s fun;” “it’s cheaper on

gas;” “it’s so easy to get a parking space on base;” “you just feel more in control, more aware of your surroundings than in a car;” and “it’s an awesome experience!”

Eighteen active riders and six prospective riders (representing about 10 percent of the crew) currently comprise *Crommelin*’s motorcycle safety club. Meeting once a month, we address various safety topics, including PPE, safe-riding practices, and the use of ORM strategies to minimize the risks of motorcycle riding.



*Crommelin* riders are urged to take a refresher course similar to this every couple of years.

Navy photo by Deris Jeannette

# the Hog” for Safety

While the risks of riding a motorcycle are high, you can reduce the hazards by wearing all the proper PPE—passengers included—and using safe-riding practices. These practices include doing a pre-ride safety check, keeping a vigilant eye on all upcoming traffic, maintaining safe distances from other motorists, and performing periodic maintenance.

While a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) course is required, we also recommend completing the experienced-rider course every couple of years

to refresh your safe-driving skills. One of the things we do in club meetings is to review the course content and best practices that were taught at the MSF course. This review helps reinforce how best to react to certain types of scenarios that can spell disaster if you don't deal with them correctly.

Because our ship is deployed, all recent meetings have been in the classroom. When we return to our home port (Pearl Harbor), though, we intend to have some club rides to reinforce the techniques necessary for safe commuting. “If you don't

practice these techniques, you won't be effective in using them when you really need them,” said Ltjg. Bullock.

We also have created an intranet page, which we use to display updated club news, as well as base and Internet information on motorcycle safety. Another function of the webpage is to provide a forum for more experienced riders to share the lessons they have learned the hard way. My crash story is there—the one about a pothole that got the best of me while traveling 40 mph. The helmet that saved my life was displayed on the mess desks and then at the ship's pre-deployment leave-and-upkeep safety stand-down.

By taking ownership of motorcycle safety on behalf of mission readiness and personal safety, the crew of *Crommelin* hopes to minimize or even eliminate motorcycle incidents. ■

*The author is president of Crommelin's motorcycle club. If you would like to start a club or want ideas, he will welcome your e-mail. Send it to [katz@crommelin.navy.mil](mailto:katz@crommelin.navy.mil).*

