

# SAFETY & EDUCATION

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Safety has always been an important issue in my life. I have been a professional truck driver for over forty years. Of that time, I have spent 35 years as a long distance driver being away from home days and weeks at a time, not enjoying the normal things that most people do, like spending time with their family, going to the ball game, or even going motorcycling. I have spent an average of 3,000 miles a week on the road, which adds up to 5,460,000 miles over a 35 year span.

In that time, I have seen a drastic change in the driving habits and attitudes in our driving society. It is not a smile or a friendly wave any more. It is an unwarranted gesture or we are literally cut off. It is not the equipment and safety devices needing improvement, but rather the attitudes and manners of people that are in need of repair.

Before joining A.B.A.T.E. of Illinois, Northwest Suburban Chapter, in November of 1992, I had belonged to a motorcycle touring club. This gave me insight into different types of organizations, such as social functions, charity runs, poker runs, and group rides, and I could see how learning to interact with our driving society was important. I wanted to be a part of the guiding force to be able to educate our legislators as well as the public on motorcycle awareness.

Being away all those years, I was never really able to keep up with politics; so I decided to do my part by being involved with the Safety and Education Program of A.B.A.T.E.. The State Safety and Education Coordinator was not only my neighbor and friend but instituted the beginning of our chapter. He was also the chapter Safety & Education Director. After six months with my chapter, he felt that with my strong knowledge in safety, I would be a perfect candidate for our chapter Safety & Education Director.

Being a director has allowed me to learn more. My working nights and being off during the day

was a perfect way to work into the school program. Our chapter has over 200 members, of which over 10% are involved in the Motorcycle Awareness Program that we present to the High Schools.

I started out with one school and I now have 14 schools. This last semester we reached 70 classes and 1,400 students, encouraging motorcycle awareness and promoting the motorcycle safety course here in Illinois. If they do ride, they are properly educated and trained before they come onto the roadway to interact with today's drivers. I have also begun to establish our Motorcycle Awareness Program with the Senior Centers, Kiwanis Clubs and other organizations.

A professional driver and a motorcyclist have a lot in common: size; number of wheels; pre-trip inspection of vehicle before going anywhere (tires, lights, turn signals, oil level, etc.); post-trip inspection; constantly checking your mirrors for other vehicles; watching for debris on the roadway or potholes. Some of the dangers we both share are people cutting us off, not indicating their intentions, violating our right of way, driving in the left lane at speeds slower than the posted speed making people pass on the right.

Then you get the vehicles out there with one headlight, one tail light or no tail lights, or a cracked or broken windshield. Some of these vehicles shouldn't be on the road. These are some of the things that we as motorcyclists, must be aware, at least 110% of the time. It is important that we not only inspect our vehicle at the beginning and the end of each trip, we must be aware of other vehicles' problems that could be a hazard to us. We must be alert to vehicles not only in our front but even in front of them because of other drivers' reaction time. The same pertains to our rear and sides. There is no room for error for us.

This is why I feel that if you belong to any

organization and it has a safety & education program, you must get involved. I have presented safety programs at different motorcycle clubs about interacting with trucks, and they have been well appreciated. We have a responsibility to our own. If we can save a life, we are very rich.

In September of 1993, I attended the Meeting of the Minds, with members from the Motorcycle Riders Foundation, American Motorcyclists Association, and members of MROs from around the nation. It was a wonderful inspiration and a learning experience, not only legislatively but educationally. That is why I have taken a stronger stand supporting our rights as motorcyclists. We will attend an Illinois State Seminar of High School & College, Driver Education, to promote more Motorcycle Awareness.

We have just completed a video of our Motorcycle Awareness Program, which will enable the schools that are too far away to have someone go there, have the advantage of our program also.

I feel that I am a contributing force to Legislation through Education.