

# Stayin' Safe Advanced Rider Training

Rider Magazine

November 22, 2010

Filed under [Rider Magazine Blog](#)



Last week *Rider's Riding Well* columnist and motorcycle instructor Eric Trow was here doing his first training session in California. Instructor Pete Tamblyn came along, too, for the three-day event. Eric and Pete had flown into Los Angeles International Airport and picked up two BMW R 1200 GSs from EagleRider Motorcycle Rental. Six riders joined them and I popped in for the last day of riding to see what all the instruction was about. I picked the best day to join them, too, as the group had started off in the rain the day before, and this last day was clear and perfect. We were also riding some of the best roads in SoCal, the twisties of the Santa Monica Mountains. These roads include long, sweeping turns and low-speed tight corners that go up and down between inland and the coast.



Left to right: Pete Tamblyn, Don Theile, Eric Trow, Jeff Abell, Bob Stallard, Chris Phillips, Ken Berendes and Bob McTavish on Stayin' Safe's inaugural Southern California Advanced Rider Training session.

The first question you might have is, "What makes Eric and Pete qualified?" Eric is owner of **Stayin' Safe Advanced Rider Training** in Pennsylvania, which he took over from *Rider* magazine's former *Stayin' Safe* column contributor, Lawrence Grodsky. Eric was an MSF RiderCoach for years, worked for the Automobile Club in traffic safety and has been riding since he was five years old. He has been around motorcycles all his life since his grandfather owned a motorcycle shop. Pete is a senior instructor at Stayin' Safe and has worked with Atlanta, Georgia, motorcycle schools. He has also been a motorcycle tour guide for Pancho Villa Moto Tours, leading groups through Mexico.



Stayin' Safe Senior Instructor Eric Trow (white shirt) uses a chalk drawing on the ground to explain lane position by marking

Eric hooked me up with an FRS radio, into which I plugged my favorite earbuds. Eric sets the radios so you can hear them but...heh heh...they can't hear you—so no two-way discussions here. The other riders already had two days of riding instruction under their belts, so the third day was a review of the training. As we were riding along, Eric and Pete were feeding us information about potential hazards and ideal lane position. What a great idea! Basically, the course is all about making good decisions on the road with real-time commentary.

So we were riding along Mulholland Drive and I had this voice in my head telling me to watch out for that parked car on the right because I don't know if there's someone in it ready to bolt out into my lane, to check my mirrors when I see a potential hazard up ahead because I need to know what's going on behind me in case I need to swerve, and how to position

Xs where a motorcycle would be positioned. In this case, he's stepping on the "motorcycle" (!) as he's explaining where to position yourself for the next turn.

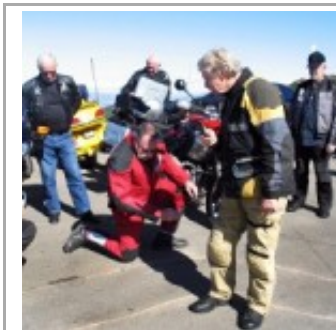
myself to minimize these hazards, and remember there's no need for your hands to be clenched in a viselike grip on the bar, and.... Whew, a lot of information is being delivered! The one that really struck home with me was to check mirrors frequently which, I admit, I sometimes do not do as often as I should.

When we got to the top of Stunt Road, which has a spectacular view down the mountains to the Pacific Ocean, Eric whipped out his Ziploc bag of

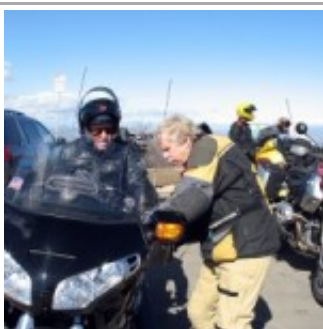
tiny pieces of chalk for his "chalk talk." ("I must remember to get new chalk," he muttered half to himself.) He drew various "lanes" on the ground and marked Xs where a bike was positioned and then asked the riders to indicate the best part of the lane to be in. This stresses how you want to put yourself where you can see as far down the road as possible.

Each of us got a chance to ride directly behind Eric and Pete and observe their lines...of course, we were encouraged to pick the best lines for ourselves. And then the instructors followed right behind each of us to watch our riding and offer suggestions. In the twisties, we were reminded to use our bodies to steer the bikes and given information on when to brake if needed and how to power out of turns.

In Pete's slow, soothing Southern drawl, he uses an example that we should be enjoying these turns on our motorcycles the way a dog enjoys hanging his head out of a car window and feeling the wind on his face! This isn't just boring commentary...this is real-time information being delivered in a way that holds your attention.



Bob (red Aerostich suit) studies "lane position" and decides where next to position the "motorcycle" during Eric's chalk talk.

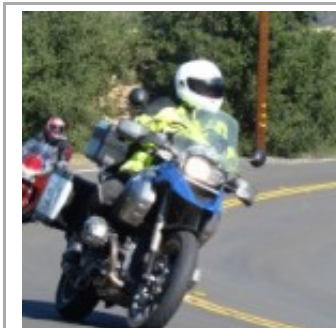


Don (aboard his bike) rode his Gold Wing through the twisties like it was a sportbike. Here he is with Stayin' Safe Instructor Pete Tamblyn (wearing the black and yellow jacket).

Jeff, who rides a Gold Wing, said, "Where I understood that lane position could be used to enhance my safety, Eric offered specific strategies to deal with a variety of static and dynamic hazards that could be minimized by proper lane position." Don, also aboard a Gold Wing, said he was now taking in more information. Chris, on a BMW RT, grew up riding these roads and felt he now learned to ride them in a new, safer way. Ken, who was riding a Harley Ultra, found the suggestion to get your body into position before a turn to be the most helpful. There were two Bobs, both aboard BMWs, and one found the suggestion to watch far ahead the best idea, while the other Bob liked the technique of letting the engine do the braking while going downhill.

As motorcyclists, we have a big advantage in that we can move around in our lanes to position ourselves away from hazards, and by keeping the bike in gear at stops and looking around and watching our mirrors,

we have the ability to flee quickly if we see a potential hazard approaching. With all this constant information and suggestions being given to us, we all left there with a greater awareness of how to best protect ourselves out on the road. The only thing I would have done differently is to have taken the class for all three days. It's best to experience it for yourself, and I highly recommend the class! You can check out Eric's website



Eric demonstrates how to go through a corner; e.g. looking way ahead.



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