RIDE BRIGHT

Be Smart–Be Seen | Give drivers a chance to see you

Conspicuity (con-spik-CUE-i-tee): *The condition of being "visible," "easy to notice" or "obvious"; the traits of an object causing it to draw attention to itself, even if no one's actively searching for it.*

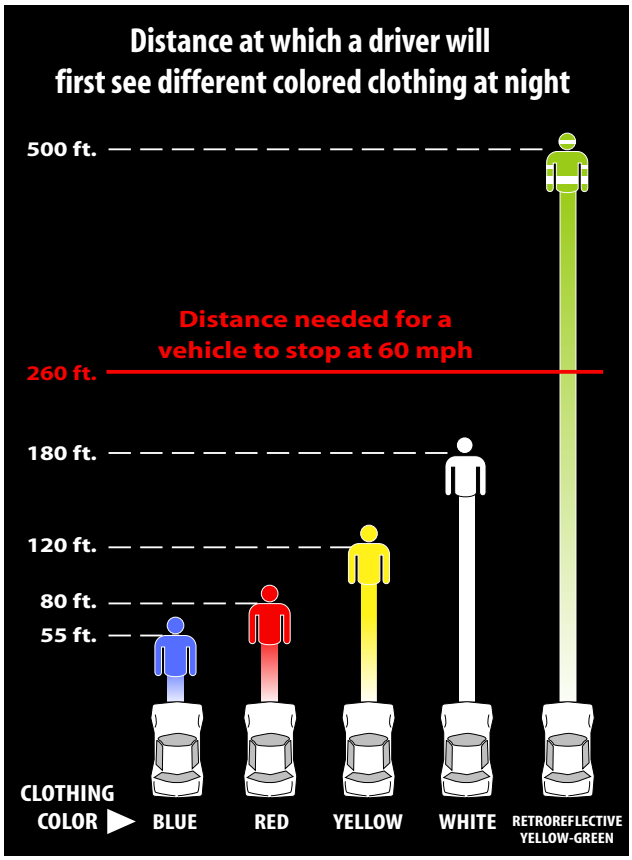
"I didn't see him."

A common complaint of street riders is that other motorists fail to observe them. Motorists who encroach on motorcyclists' rights of way frequently state, "I didn't see him," or "He came out of nowhere." Motorists are likely to see you sooner and give you plenty of room, if you take steps to make yourself more conspicuous.

Clothing colors have similar visibility rankings in day and night, but daylight visibility is also affected by the environment and seasonal changes in weather and foliage. Think of how "camouflage" is used by animals in nature and by hunters to adjust for changing seasons. Night visibility has been well-documented as illustrated in the chart on the right.

Research indicates:

- Wearing reflective or fluorescent clothing and white or light colored helmets and using headlights in daytime could reduce serious injuries or death from motorcycle crashes by up to one-third.
- Fluorescent yellow and orange provide the best daytime visibility for clothing.
- Retroreflective materials provide extra conspicuity at night.
- High intensity discharge (HID) or xenon headlamps seem more conspicuous to road users.



Source USDOT-FHWA

What you can do to be more visible

- Wear lighter color clothes and helmet. (Fluorescent yellow and orange are best in daylight.)
- Use a headlamp modulator, add auxiliary lighting or install a HID headlamp.
- Use retroreflective material on your clothing and your bike – especially if you ride at night.
- Position yourself strategically in your lane where you may be better seen.

Bright shirt

Bright helmet

Modulating headlamp

HID headlamp

Retroreflective material

"Remember, as a responsible motorcyclist it is your responsibility to help the motoring public be aware of you while you are on the road." *- Iowa Motorcycle Operator Manual, Page 1*

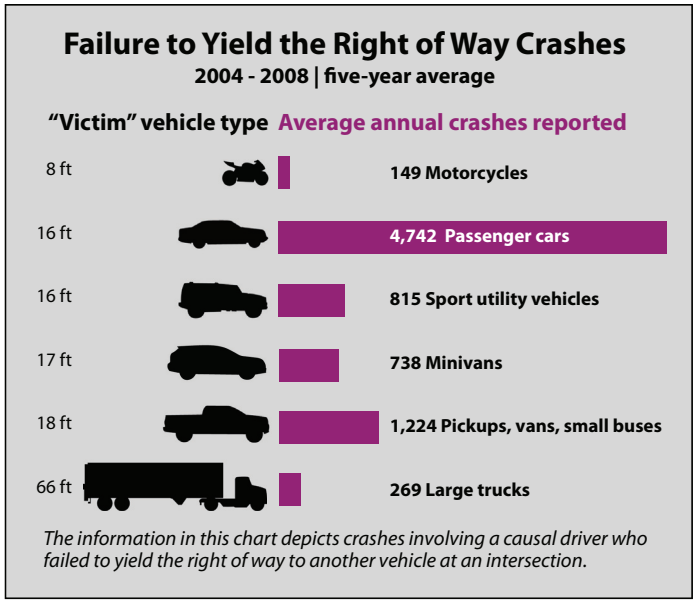
Human factors

The human factors behind some driver mistakes explain why it is important for you to be a defensive operator – making yourself more visible so drivers are more likely to see you. Smaller vehicles appear farther away and seem to be traveling slower than their actual speed. The vehicle driver's misjudgment of the motorcycle's speed is frequently noted in these crashes.

Iowa crash information reveals drivers pull out in front of all sizes of vehicles, and you cannot count on other drivers to see and respond appropriately at intersections.

Your best defense as a motorcyclist is to Ride Bright and make yourself stand out in traffic or in the surroundings so you will "Be Seen and Be Safe."

Source Iowa DOT Office of Traffic and Safety



All drivers

As a motorist or motorcyclist it is important to understand that drivers often fail to yield when there is no real reason that they could not have seen the other vehicle. Much like the audience at a magic show, drivers often cannot explain why they could not see what was occurring "right before their eyes."

- "Change blindness" occurs when a person looks at a scene, but fails to see changes in the scene.
- Even when looking at still images, a viewer can experience the change blindness phenomenon when part of the image changes.

Who needs to see you sooner?

Older drivers

Learning drivers

Cell phone / distracted drivers

Any drivers

Older drivers

Iowa has a very high ratio of older drivers, with about one in five licensed Iowa drivers being age 65 or older. There are medical and driving exposure reasons related to age that affect a person's vision, judgement and response time. All of these factors can come into play on the roadway.

Medical factors

- The lens of the eye becomes cloudy and yellow with age, giving faulty information for driving decisions.
- A 50-year-old needs five times more light than a 20-year-old.
- A 60-year-old needs 10 times more light than a 20-year-old.
- With age, people lose depth perception and peripheral vision, making it harder to judge distance and speed.

Exposure factors

- Aging drivers develop reduced capacities to see and judge the placement and speed of other vehicles.
- As people drive less often and shorter distances, they are less likely to "see" and respond quickly to various driving situations.

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