

May Safety Article: "What's In Your Lunchbox?"

My Mother's voice still resounds in my head from every time I asked the question, "Mom, can I please take a lunch to school today instead of eating cafeteria food?" The answer was always "No, Matthew. The school lunches are good food and I can't fix a lunch for you like that for that cheap." So every day I would sit in the cafeteria and watch the kids who brought their lunches from home unpack stuff that may or may not have been as healthy, but certainly a lot more fun to trade with the others. They would say things like, "Ugh! Mom gave me a peanut butter sandwich again. Hey, Billy! Trade me your package of Ho-Hos for my sandwich." It was always an open market bartering extravaganza in the school cafeteria, and I was relegated to the choice of a sloppy joe or what was called a burrito every Tuesday of my formative years. The meat that was in those I am sure was of dubious origin. Hence, I was always envious of those kids who brought lunches from home and would find myself fantasizing about the tasty morsels of joy that were held in the magical paper bags of my classmates. Now that I am older, my curiosity goes beyond just what is in another's lunch box, and has evolved into risk management and making sure that people have security and safety in their lives.

Asking other bikers about the shiny and go-fast parts they have hanging on their bike, or about what tools or gear they carry is common communication between those who own two wheels. Something that should also be part of that conversation is asking what kind of items others carry in an emergency preparedness kit for your motorcycle in the event of an accident or other medical emergency.

It really isn't something we put a lot of thought into because the event happens so rarely, but it is like a spare tire on a car. You never think about it until you need it! We always remember our sunglasses, our mobile phone, maybe some music to listen to on the bike. We'll usually have leather gear or some kind of long sleeve sweatshirt in the cooler seasons, or rain gear in case the skies open up and pour down on us. Some have learned to carry a few hand tools along as well, but what do you have on your bike that can help SAVE YOUR LIFE?

I know people that carry firearms with them all hours of the day because they are of the opinion they may need one. I also know people that carry a pocket knife for "just in case" reasons. The most memorable item I recall was that of a client of mine. She carried a pink rabbit foot with her on her keychain and would never let it get very far from her at all. She truly believed in the mystical powers of the rabbit foot. While all of these things could very well help, what about treating injuries from a motorcycle accident?

There are many opportunities to find value-priced first aid kits of various sizes, shapes and quantities. Many have bandaids, gauze rolls, gauze pads and some kind of tape. All of that is good for stopping or protecting small-to-moderate size cuts, but won't go a long way in packing an arterial bleed. For that, heavy gauze sponges or even sanitary napkins are ideal for controlling blood loss. After all, that is what they are made to do!

In case of a broken bone or joint, some method of stabilization is important. Bones rarely create smooth breaks. The jagged edges of a bone break can tear muscle and blood vessels. Stabilizing a bone or joint with a device called a "SAM Splint" and using a triangular bandage or gauze roll (preferably both) to stabilize the injury can help prevent further tissue damage.

I also like keeping eye drops on my bike. Saline solution for contact lenses also works well. Keeping this handy in case dust or a bug flies into my eye can make a meaningful difference in roadside care versus painfully riding with one eye closed until I can get to a place with a public restroom to wash it out in the sink.

Anything beyond that becomes personal preference. Some people have severe allergies and need to keep an Epi-Pen with them. Others have medicines they take on a set schedule and need to have available. You may also choose aspirin, antibiotic ointment or other items. This kind of stuff has expiration dates and need replacement over time. In my opinion, on a motorcycle, I am more concerned about managing the risks that can keep me from getting home! Adding too many items to my emergency preparedness kit can clutter it up and take away from valuable motorcycle storage space, adding weight to my bike.

Although not as tasty as the Ho-Hos in Billy's lunch, it is important to keep emergency kits on the bike that can be utilized should the occasion arise. Make sure to spend a few minutes thinking about those items, but don't worry about buying out a drug store or a \$90 first-aid kit to keep on your bike. If nothing else, throw a couple sanitary napkins and some duct tape in a plastic zip bag! However, a good protocol to follow when selecting items would be to think about bleeding control, bone and joint stabilization, and medicines needed that can help you get back home....so you can live to ride another day!

"...and Hey! Let's be CAREFUL out there!"

- By Matt Thomason