

## KHOG Safety Article, May 2017: "Can You Hear Me Now? Part I"

Innovations in technology never cease to amaze me. I called my mother the other evening and I never once had to push a button or turn a dial. I simply looked at my mobile phone sitting on the coffee table, and said to it, "Hey, Siri! Call my mother". The next thing I knew, that little redhead was telling me all about how the skunks are eating all the cat's food and how fast her baby ducks are growing. It wasn't that many years ago that, in order to make a call like that, one would have to wait for the neighbors to get off of their phone to clear the line, then call the operator and give a long string of numbers to charge a long distance call to a credit card. One day, a new innovation came along and you simply had to dial 10-10, and the access code for the long distance company of your choice. Now, long distance call charges are becoming a thing of the past and, with many mobile phones, it is quite common to actually have a video conversation with someone half way around the world! So, if I lived in Naples, Italy and wanted to see those Missouri skunks eating my mother's cat food for myself, it's just a matter of telling my phone to video-chat with my mother, and I'm getting an eyeful of skunk. I'll take that over a noseful any day! Thank God these phones don't have smell-a-vision....yet.

What if you needed to make contact with someone for something more urgent than a cat's food? What if you have been enjoying the wonderful spring weather, riding your motorcycle, out in the middle of nowhere and you have an accident in which you need help? We all know that in an emergency, dialing "911" is quickest for getting help on the way. Mobile phones are great for that, but they can also do you a dis-service as well.

This month I am starting a short series on communicating to get help in an emergency. Not all emergency dispatch and response systems are the same, so we will cover what to expect when making the call, and ways that you can be prepared to help yourself as well as others. Before we get to that, though...

To paraphrase an old saying, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Another one I would tie into that, is "An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure." To properly prepare for safe motorcycle riding, whether it be for a day or a month, we all know there are many processes we exercise. Checking your ride's TCLOCS is one of them (Don't remember TCLOCS? Ask your dealer to walk you through it!). Other ideal processes include planning your route, confirming road and weather conditions, and then letting someone else know your plans and regularly check-in.

Now, I know that all this ritual goes against the grain of many leather-clad, iron-horse gypsies, and the dogma of open-range and freedom to which we cling. In years past, I was probably among the worst at spontaneously going MIA for a couple days just to escape the hubbub of the city. I've even been known to say, "I guess if a month goes by, then maybe start making some calls." It really isn't the best way to go. It's pretty easy to overrun a curve in Madison County, Arkansas, or the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, and not be found until the buzzards start circling.

This is why I love having multiple communications devices that use different types of signals. Is one better than the other? Not really. Some may be more efficient than others, but they have their downsides as well. Many touring bikes are equipped some kind of citizens band, or CB, communications built-in. They are good for attempting communication with other motorcyclists in close proximity to you and the occasional over-the-road truck driver. In general, continuous monitoring of CB broadcasts has waned with the advent of the mobile phone. They are, however, not dependent upon a cell tower repeater to

provide service and fantastic for point-to-point contact. If you have no service for your mobile phone, or it is otherwise rendered useless, and you are unable to make yourself visible to others, a CB radio can offer a way to call for someone - anyone - to send help, as long as someone is listening. There are also hand-held CB radios available that are independent of your motorcycle. They are not necessarily small in size but will fit inside a jacket. Their signal range is not great, and if riding alone, the odds of someone hearing you before your battery dies out is are worse. However, if riding in a group that utilizes CB radio communication between bikes, they can be a life saver and enable riders to keep in contact if they become separated, need to make a route change, or even a pit stop.

In the coming months we'll be covering multiple techniques for emergency communications for motorcycle enthusiasts of all types. I'll also be including some tips and tricks that may help, if you are like me, and occasionally wander off the beaten path where knobby tires make for the best tread.

In the meantime, assess what communication tools you have available on your bike, and your person, at a moment's notice. Think about how they would be used, by whom, who the intended recipient of those communications may be, and what your message needs to be.

Riding free and being in the open air is something that a motorcycle does best for us. Make sure you have a way to get help when you need it, so you can get to safety, and live to ride another day!

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

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