

Give Sneezy Street The Cold Shoulder

Wednesday 5 November, 2014

#wheelsinwinter

The IAM is asking riders and drivers to think about the challenges faced on the road particularly if they're unwell. With more than 200 common cold viruses and three types of flu viruses, most of us will have a cold this winter. Yet many motorists will try and ignore the symptoms and get behind the wheel when it is unsafe to do so.

Decision time

If you start feeling unwell you need to decide whether you should carry on or stay indoors and rest until the symptoms subside. If you do decide to carry on with a heavy cold or flu, be aware that your riding and driving can be severely affected. Not only will your concentration drop by more than 50 per cent, but your reaction time slows down – forcing you to brake more frequently and suddenly.

Don't dose off

Symptoms, such as sneezing, runny eyes, fever and tiredness, individually or combined, are likely to affect your ability to ride and drive safely. While over-the-counter medicines may control a runny nose and sneezing they tend to contain codeine, which can blur your vision and make you feel extremely tired and drowsy. If the label or the leaflet reads, 'may cause drowsiness' you should assume it will and therefore avoid travelling. Check with your GP about prescription drugs for more information about the side-effects.

It's contagious

Germes are easily spread from not keeping good hygiene practices. If you're carrying passengers on your motorcycle or in your car while you're ill, the likelihood is you're going to pass on the cold or flu to them. Making matters worse, some of these passengers may also be motorists who will ride and drive when they're unwell. The more unwell motorists there are on the road, the more dangerous riding and driving will become.

The consequences

Riding or driving when you're too tired to stay awake or when your ability is impaired will have serious implications. For example, as drivers can travel up to 50ft with their eyes closed during a sneeze, they can either temporarily lose control of their car or be involved in a serious accident; where you not only risk your own life but the lives of other road users. This is why it's important to think about whether you need to ride or drive at all when suffering from a cold or flu. If you are stopped by the police after taking a cold remedy or driving when unfit to do so you could find yourself charged, disqualified or serving a lengthy prison sentence.

Route to recovery

Winter driving is stressful enough so you should not add to the stress and compromise yours and others' safety when you are ill. Assess carefully if you are fit to ride or drive, but if you are not then take plenty of rest away from the road – the ideal route to recovery.

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