Motorcycle courses help raise rider awareness

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

YOKOHAMA, Japan - You feel the engine vibrating directly beneath you, the wind flowing across your body, the power and quick response as you roll back on the throttle and push against the handlebars. You are experiencing the feeling of freedom and exhilaration that most avid motorcyclists claim to enjoy.

Even though riding a motorcycle can give some people these exciting sensations, it also exposes them to dangers that automobile drivers are not.

However, Cape Fox Professional Services (CFPS), a company contracted by the Navy to provide recreational, traffic safety and motorcycle safety training, offers Basic Rider (BRC) and Experienced Rider (ERC) courses to help protect motorcycle riders by raising their awareness of their bikes and their surroundings.

"The Basic Rider Course takes a person who knows absolutely nothing about riding a motorcycle and teaches the basic fundamental skills on how to ride," said Douglas Knight a certified Motorcycle Safety foundation (MSF) instructor, or RiderCoach, who works for CFPS. "ERC is meant to finesse the skills they learn in the basic course."

Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW) Kevin Perry of Commander Submarine Group Seven, expressed that the course is beneficial to him due to his limited riding knowledge.

"I have very little experience," said Perry. "The amount of experience I had was starting and stopping. So, this is going to help me out a lot."

The courses, which are usually given at U.S. Army Garrison North Dock Yokohama, are required for Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) personnel who want to ride motorcycles overseas.

"I decided to take the course because I have less than a year riding experience, and I'm looking forward to getting out this summer to ride, and you need this course as a prerequisite [to getting a motorcycle license]," said Culinary Specialist 3rd Class (SW) Anontio Hendricks, who works at the Naval Air Facility Atsugi Far East Cafe. "These [instructors] are here to teach you and to help you become a better rider."

Cape Fox Professional Services RiderCoach Douglas Knight instructs a student to be sure to keep her eyes up and look through her path of travel during a Basic Rider Course held at U.S. Army Garrison Yokohama North Dock April 25. The course, which a prerequisite for getting a Status of Forces Agreement sponsored motorcycle license is designed to teach basic motorcycle safety and riding skills.

The BRC and ERC are required for street bikes, or cruisers. However, the Military Sport Rider (MSRC) course, which CFPS offers as well, is required for anyone who wants to ride sport bikes.

Due to the acceleration, speed and maneuverability of sport bikes, the MSRC focuses on skills specific to characteristics of these bikes such as braking dynamics, cornering techniques and traction management, according to an MSF Sport Bike Rider Course information sheet.

According to Air Force Staff Sgt. Moses Jerod Davis, a dental laboratory technician at Yokota Air Base, he really enjoyed the cornering exercises, but the most beneficial lesson he learned was how to properly modulate the clutch.

"[I took this course] just to have some fun and learn," said Davis. "This is my first time, so it's a good experience."

In addition to teaching the skills to control the aspects of sport bikes, the instructors also cover the mental aspects of riding them, such as attitude and personal risk assessment.

"I've had people go through [the course] that have been riding for 10 or 15 years that don't know how to slow, look, press and roll through a corner and how important looking through the corner is," said Knight. "So, this course teaches the basic skills and hopefully… provides them the information so that they can make the right choices."

In order to qualify for the course, individuals must be SOFA status and have a valid SOFA driver's license. However, there are some exceptions.

"You can use the ERC for licensing purposes, if you've already done the basic course back in the states," he said.

According to Knight, people should only sign up for the courses if they are sincere in their desire to ride a motorcycle.

"Riding a motorcycle is not for everyone," said Knight. "If it's something they want to do, then, of course, I encourage them to come out and take the course before getting on a motorcycle."

Contact Douglas Knight at 243-8119 for more information or visit www.navymotorcyclerider.com to sign up for a course.

Commissary case lot sale adds new twist

From Defense Commissary Agency Public Affairs

YOKOSUKA, Japan – If you clip coupons till the Sunday paper looks like Swiss cheese, you may be a commissary shopper. If you are so good at managing your grocery budget you have extra money in your checking account, you may be a commissary shopper. If you have ever gotten up at dawn and waited in line to buy bargains in bulk, you just may be a commissary shopper of the case lot sale variety.

All kidding aside, shopping during the commissary case lot sale can earn you some serious savings. The first case lot sale this year will be May 14-15 at the Yokosuka commissary.

"Shopping regularly at the commissary saves you an average of 30 percent or more, but there are even bigger savings to be had at commissary case lot sales – up to 50 percent or more," said Daniel L. Smith, Yokosuka Commissary director. "And, when it comes to savings, we all can use a little extra cash in our pocket."

Each year in May and September the Defense Commissary Agency holds a worldwide case lot sale event, offering customers bulk quantities of their favorite products at increased savings, such as canned goods, beverages, cleaning or laundry products, and in some cases, fresh chicken, pork, beef and produce. According to Smith, a new twist will be added to this year's case lot sale.

"Our case lot 'Mix & Match' sale will be at the red brick area. 'Mix & Match' means that you can fill a case with assorted flavors and still get the case price," said Smith. "We are always looking for more ways to give customers the most value for their money. The twice-a-year worldwide sale has become a commissary tradition, and shoppers look forward to stocking their pantries and multiplying their savings."

The Yokosuka commissary will be closed May 23 and 24 for the annual formal accountable inventory. This is an important requirement that all commissary stores must do. No special orders can be placed or picked up. Please plan accordingly and stock up in preparation for the two-day closing.

PWD Yokosuka Base Support Vehicle and Equipment (BSVE) Division employees pose for a recent group photo. BSVE has provided extraordinary transportation support to the CFAY community and its tenant commands since the earthquake and tsunami struck Japan, March 11. Heavy vehicle and VIP drivers safely transported families, students and many VIPs, effectively coordinated by dispatchers, and tractor trailer drivers, crane/forklift operators and riggers supported numerous contingency operations. The BSVE team completes their mission to transport passengers safely as always, and continues to support CFAY with all its tranportation requirements.

Photo by Yasuko Nakamura