

*CycleSafe: Taming the Road Safety Rally:
Using Community Collaboration to Promote Motorcycle Safety*

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January 2006

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Abstract

CycleSafe: Taming the Road Safety Rally is a model of collaboration between traditional and non-traditional community based organizations to provide a family oriented rally event to promote motorcycle safety. The primary goal is to promote safe riding including sober riding and safe road habits in a format that invites large groups of riders and non-riders to attend. The format is a one day event (rally) at a motorcycle dealer.

CycleSafe: Taming the Road Safety Rally

Introduction: CycleSafe: Taming the Road Safety Rally is one model of collaboration between traditional and non-traditional community based organizations to provide a family oriented rally event to promote motorcycle safety.

Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. (WCS) is a 93 year-old non-profit agency with a commitment to public safety-particularly as it relates to drunk driving. Therefore, promoting motorcycle safety was a natural fit for the agency. A WCS administrator, who is also a rider, along with a H.O.G. (Harley Owners Group) member, came up with the idea of using community collaboration in the style of a rally to promote safety.

The one day rally focused on promoting motorcycle safety through a variety of venues with special attention paid to motorcyclist impairment, personal protective gear, motorist awareness, and riding skills.

Goals of the Event

The primary goal of the event is to promote safe riding including sober riding and safe road habits in a format that invites large groups of riders and non-riders to attend. The format is a one day event (rally) at a motorcycle dealer. The rally includes the following venues for promoting motorcycle safety.

The most popular session is the Law Enforcement Riding Demonstrations. Several motorcycle officers from the state highway patrol, county sheriff's department and city police departments provide ongoing sessions regarding crash avoidance skills, braking and basic riding skills. In 2005, we also had 3 representatives from the Harley Davidson Motor Company's Worldwide Police & Fleet Sales present at the rally who

also gave riding demonstrations. There is a course set up and the officers are available all day to do scheduled demonstrations and talk individually with participants.

A second session is the group ride. There are three rides throughout the day which include an orientation on group riding skills followed by a 60 minute ride which returns to the location of the rally.

A third set of sessions are safety workshops which address issues such as conspicuity, driver impairment (alcohol and drug use), proper use of protective gear, responding after an accident and appropriate insurance coverage.

The fourth set of sessions is motorcycle safety demonstrations. The sessions rotate throughout the day and include picking up your bike, a pre-ride bike check, proper trailer loading and noise reduction. These sessions are presented by the dealer service staff and safety officers from the local H.O.G. chapters.

The final way safety is promoted is by having exhibitors who share information about safety. Exhibitors included groups such as the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Riders Edge®, Accident Scene Management, Inc., ABATE, Sentry Insurance, a local hospital, and a chiropractor.

We opted to do a family-oriented event and therefore included kid's activities. The local police department was present with a booth and promoted bicycle safety. The fire department was present with fire trucks which increased the events visibility and fire safety information. An insurance company did child ID's (for free). There were also games, temporary tattoos, photos on a motorcycle and a bicycle raffle. All of the activities for the children were free of charge.

The secondary goal of the rally is to bring together a variety of community organizations that have an investment in motorcycle safety. The CycleSafe Rally provides a format to bring the groups together with the common goal. Our group included a non-profit agency, a Harley-Davidson dealer, a Chevrolet dealer, a drug testing company, a local DJ, the state patrol and local law enforcement and two local HOG chapters. A handful of these groups participated in a planning committee to plan and implement the event.

On the day of the event, over 60 volunteers from the non-profit and from the local HOG chapters provided support to ensure smooth operations at the event. They provided assistance with set up and tear down, parking, road captains for the group rides, and volunteers for the kid's activities and adult activities.

The first year, the event drew approximately 1500 people. The second year drew approximately 1100. Both events had mixed crowds which included bikers, motorists, and families with children.

Guidelines for Planning a Community Event

The following are guidelines to consider to present motorcycle safety events in non-traditional ways using community collaboration to promote safe riding on America's highways. While our event was a rally format, other formats may be chosen.

One of the first steps to planning a successful event is to pull together a variety of community organizations that have an investment in motorcycle and/or highway safety. Members for the collaboration may include law enforcement, motorcycle groups, motorcycle and car dealers, insurance companies, motorcycle safety class providers,

hospitals, chiropractors and other medical services and local non-profit agencies who promote community safety.

Once the group is established, use a committee format to plan the event. If it is to be a true collaborative effort, a variety of groups should be represented. The first task for the group should be to choose the format. While our event was a rally, any agreed upon format could be used (conference, workshop, etc.). After the format is chosen, it will be important to agree upon what type of activities will happen throughout the event. There are a variety of motorcycle safety concerns which can be addressed such as conspicuity, driver impairment, group riding skills, pre-ride cycle check, protective gear, etc. One item to remember is to keep the sessions interactive. The more that the participants can interact with exhibitors and demonstrators, the better attendance and retention you will have. We also provided bleacher seating for the workshops which worked very well.

Once the activities are chosen, members of the planning committee should take responsibility for one or more. They may be the one to teach/demonstrate or be responsible to find the appropriate party to do so. Another vital piece to plan for is volunteers for the day of the event. It will likely be necessary to plan on assistance with parking, set –up and tear-down. Our event used non-riding volunteers which allowed them to interact with “bikers” and discover how committed they are to riding safely.

Another area to consider is advertising and getting the word out about the event. Our event used posters and 4 x 6 post cards which could be handed out or mailed. The posters and cards were delivered to businesses that motorcyclists and non-riders frequented. The dealer involved and the non profit also provided public service announcements and radio and print advertising of the event. The event was also put in

several “biker” newsletters. We also had a booth at the annual city public safety event one month prior to the event to increase visibility.

It is important to keep the focus on the purpose of the event and keep the group planning for promoting safe riding. One of the goals may be to have the rally be inviting to non-riders. This exposes them to motorcycles in a non-threatening environment and allows them to learn about good riding. The event may also include demonstrations or workshops focused specifically on the non-rider. Topics may include respecting the motorcyclist or anticipating a motorcyclist’s maneuvers.

Another tool for involving the non-rider is to have a family oriented event. This might include kids activities. The focus would still be safety and demonstrations on bicycle safety, off road riding or child ID’s are some possible activities to provide.

A major point to remember during the planning is to be creative. The more activities and unique workshops you can provide, the bigger your draw will be. This will also help to draw in the rider and the non-rider.

Conclusion

The payoffs from an event such as a safety rally are well worth the effort and hard work it takes to put one on. The first, most important payoff is safer roads for both the rider and non-rider. The more people who are exposed to safe road and riding skills and practice them, the more opportunity there is to influence safety on our highways.

One secondary payoff is the community relationships that are created and built up due to the collaboration. The more support that is recruited for the event, the more likely there will be diverse participation. This is particularly true if you have a nonprofit or car

dealer or other entities not normally associated with motorcycle riding involved in the collaboration.

The involvement of other entities also allows them to have a new venue for expanding their client base. For example, at our event, the car dealer brought vehicles to the Harley Dealer, a chiropractor gave away free 5 minute massages and a local safety supply firm sold safety items. The non profit involved also used the venue as a fundraiser for a program that works with the courts to reduce drunk driving. They had a raffle and a silent auction at the event.

Nontraditional events such as rallies can be excellent formats to promote motorcycle safety. The creative format allows groups to bring in riders and non-riders to an event that promotes and demonstrates motorcycle safety. The more opportunity there is to promote rider safety and motorist awareness, the more likely we are to have safer highways and byways for riding!