



# The Most Common Road Hazard Areas are Intersections.

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Intersections can come in many shapes and sizes. How many types of intersections do you think you can name? In no particular order there is; four-way, T-junctions, Y intersections, "forks", traffic circles, Superstreet, Diverging Diamond and more. The most common road hazard areas and the most dangerous points in your travels are intersections! The purpose here is to teach you about new intersection types and expose you to some of the dangers they have and to give you a few tips to handle them more safely when travelling on your motorcycle.

Intersections can be broken down to two main types; controlled or uncontrolled. Controlled types are what we are most familiar with and have stop signs or traffic signals. Uncontrolled ones do not. The new types we will review are uncontrolled types. They typically do not have stops allowing for traffic flows to increase by 30% over uncontrolled intersections.

The Federal Highway Administration or FHWA reports roundabouts and other types of uncontrolled intersections reduce injury and fatal crashes by 78-82% compared to conventional intersections in a study done in 2019. A typical intersection has 32 conflict points compared to 8 in a roundabout. Did I mention they were safer? Oh yeah, they are.

New types of intersections like traffic circles (otherwise known as Roundabouts), Diverging Diamonds and Superstreets require you to be very aware of the traffic flows around you. You must yield to traffic coming from your left first while timing an insertion and egress to traffic flow that is also doing the same with your vehicle. Ultimately, after time you will find there is a sense of rhythm to the flow. A dangerous thing you can do is delay ingress and egress excessively, make abrupt last minute stops or pilot your craft in an unpredictable way.



**Roundabouts** come in different shapes and sizes. Some have multiple or single lanes encircling a center island with multiple entries and exits. The inside lane is useful if you are encircling most or all of the circle and are intended for drivers to go back in the direction they came from. While it looks confusing, making assertive decisions timed with your awareness of the corresponding traffic flows creates a turn taking scenario based on yielding to your left and watching to your right and is the safest way to handle this type of intersection.

**Diverging Diamond intersections**, with their geometry limit conflict-points. A good example of one is where Elmhurst Road crosses I-90. Here is a photo of that intersection. The right sided lane colored in blue becomes a left sided lane then back to the right side after crossing the highway. With no left turns from the right sided lanes, those main conflict points are eliminated in either direction of traffic flow.





A **Superstreet intersection** is also known as a restricted crossing U-turn, J-turn or reduced conflict intersection. This intersection is a variation of the Michigan Left. In this configuration, in contrast to the Michigan left, traffic on the minor road is not permitted to proceed straight across the major road or highway. Drivers on the minor road wishing to turn left or go straight must turn right onto the major road, then, a short distance away, queue (wait) into a designated U-turn (or crossover) lane in the median.

When traffic clears, they complete the U-turn and then either go straight or make a right turn when they intersect the other half of the minor road. The superstreet typically requires four traffic light-controlled intersections, and most traffic must pass through two of them, but each light has only two phases, greatly increasing average traffic flow; there is no need for numerous left-turn phases where most traffic is waiting for only a few cars to clear the intersection. Turning movements on roads with lower cross-traffic volumes may be controlled with stop or yield signs for turning traffic rather than with signals.



Uncontrolled intersections are a group riding challenge for both riders and road captain. But fear not! Road captains should do and rely on a thorough pre-ride to identify if and where they are on your route, how to handle those unique portions of your route, advise riders at the preceding ride briefing of the requirements and explain how you will handle them. As riders on a group ride we must keep in mind that these guidelines and directions are very situational. You should be alert and careful because you should always ride your own bike safely first while following the group riding guidelines. You cannot be a safe group rider before being one yourself on your own motorcycle. This is a major guideline in safe group riding as well as applying to navigating these new types of intersections.

An uncontrolled intersection may look chaotic but that does not mean it is chaotic. It is incumbent that all drivers learn and familiarize yourselves with them to use them safely. Try a few and study how to do them and your confidence will follow. Then review them again with the perspective of doing it as a group. You will see how users are relying on the others predictability, rate of motion, yielding to your left first and following lane directions so each one can navigate them successfully.

To handle these roads safely, be aware of other traffic, be alert, be assertive, follow signage restricting types of lane usage by lane and match the traffic flow, timing your ingress and egresses to avoid issues. These new types of intersections allow higher traffic flows making them cheaper for municipalities and government than increasing roadway lanes to manage traffic increases.

The best recommendation I can give is to find these roads around you and practice, practice, practice. Practice will help you become confident, skillful at handling these new types of intersections and to be as safe as possible.

Michael "Motorcycle"



P.S. A European "roundabout" Just think....it could be worse!