



## TIPS for RIDING YOUR MOTORCYCLE SAFELY in EVERY SEASON

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When you think of riding your motorcycle, you probably imagine an enjoyable ride through your favorite scenic area during pleasant weather. Unfortunately, weather isn't always that predictable or pleasant. When the weather changes unexpectedly, riders must adapt to situations that may affect the road or impact their ability to safely operate a motorcycle.

Spring, summer, fall and winter each provide unique challenges for motorcyclists. Here are some tips for each season that may help you handle the road safely:

### Spring

After the cold of winter, spring weather is often welcomed with open arms. Despite warmer temperatures, though, spring often comes with its fair share of rainy days. That means riders must know how to properly navigate slippery roads and dress for a potentially soggy ride.

Possibly the most slippery time during a rainstorm is in the first few minutes, according to the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF). Rain water begins to fill in the dimples of the asphalt and oil residue can float to the top, making for a very slick surface. The MSF suggests simply pulling over and waiting for the rain to pass.

If you need to ride through the rain, reduce your speed and increase the space between you and the vehicle you're behind, as it will take a longer distance to stop on a wet road. Keep your movements smooth and relaxed, says TwistedThrottle.com — avoid hard braking, quick acceleration and abrupt turns as the rain has already limited your traction. Be careful around standing pools and puddles of water, because you don't know how deep that water is or if there are potholes or other hazards that you need to avoid under the water.

When it comes to your riding attire, opt for a motorcycle rainsuit with covers for your boots and gloves, says the MSF. Also use reflective accessories for added visibility in the rain.

### Summer

When the hot temperatures finally hit, you can typically put away the layers and enjoy the warm weather. But that doesn't mean you can ride carefree when the mercury rises past 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Summer has its own set of conditions that require your attention.

Despite the rising temperatures, wearing less clothing or gear while on your motorcycle is not necessarily a good idea. During a long, hot ride (especially in sunny, dry climates), you should take precautions against sunburn and dehydration. While you may be tempted to head out in shorts and a T-shirt on a hot day, the MSF says that wearing long sleeves and pants may actually help prevent dehydration. Riding with a ventilated jacket allows for some air flow and helps your body feel cooler naturally as perspiration evaporates, according to UltimateMotorcycling.com. You can buy gear designed specifically for hot weather that is made with lighter materials and more ventilation. You can find anything from summer jackets to helmets to boots. UltimateMotorcycling.com also says base layers designed for warm weather can be helpful, as they'll wick moisture away from your body to help keep you cool and comfortable.

## Fall

Crisper air and falling leaves are the telltale signs that summer is over and fall is here. Before you have to worry about snow and ice, you may need to prepare for wet roads and slippery leaves littering your favorite stretch of road.

Riding your motorcycle in autumn means being prepared for fluctuating temperatures and getting caught in the rain every now and then. Wear adaptable gear, such as a jacket with a removable lining and a helmet with closeable vents, so that you can adjust to the temperature at various times of day. You may want to consider keeping rain gear with you as well.

Fallen leaves can obscure the surface of the road from the eyes of motorcycle riders. Be careful when riding over and through leaves, as they may be covering potholes or imperfections in the road, and wet leaves may affect your wheels' traction.

You'll also need to keep your eyes out for wildlife because some animals become more active during the fall as they are migrating or looking for food before the long winter. At this time of year, for example, deer can be particularly active at dawn and dusk — so keep your eyes peeled and use extra caution.

## Winter

Even the most fervent motorcycle riders may consider putting their bike away during the coldest months. Wind, snow, ice and frigid temperatures generally don't make for great motorcycle riding conditions.

Before you hit the road in winter, check your tires. Your owner's manual should provide the required amount of tread for safe driving. But, you can do a quick check of the tread on your tires by doing the "penny test." Take a penny, hold it between your thumb and forefinger so that Abraham Lincoln's head is showing. Place the top of Lincoln's head into one of the grooves of the tire's tread. If any part of Lincoln's head is obscured by the tread, you probably have a safe amount of tread, according to the MSF. If you can see above Lincoln's head, then you likely need a new tire. The MSF also recommends looking over the tires for uneven wear, bulges, cracks or anything embedded in the tire.

You'll also want to make sure your tires are inflated properly according to owner's manual says the MSF, as the cold weather can cause the pressure to drop. Since the rubber on your tires is harder when it is cold, the MSF also recommends easing into your ride to allow the tires to warm up enough to provide better traction.

Hypothermia due to severe wind chill can be a concern, especially riding a motorcycle. The speed at which you are traveling can increase your body's loss of warmth. Keeping your body warm and protected can require some serious gear, so plan ahead. Depending on the temperature, consider thermal underwear and socks, glove liners, balaclavas and other base layers. To help warm your extremities, which are generally most susceptible to cold temperatures, consider using chemical heat packs in gloves and boots, or even outfit your bike with grip, seat and foot warmers. Awearing a well-insulated helmet with a full face mask.

Regardless of the season, proper preparation and using the appropriate equipment and gear can help you safely enjoy your motorcycle year-round.