

## **Phi's Top Ten Tips On Fall/Winter Riding**

Time for an ice-cold slap in the face! Here are a few chilling safety reminders for the winter months ahead. Not everybody has the luxury of heated grips and a nice snug faring, so keep these points in mind to extend your riding pleasure!

### **1. Slippery Roads**

The first rains of winter fall on roads that have been coated with oil during the summer months. Wet roads offer less grip than dry roads and places you previously rode could have a sheen of oil that now compromises the grip of your tires.

### **2. Water Filled Pot Holes**

There is an illusion created by pot holes. Appearing like puddles, they conceal their depth...that is until you ride over them. Never assume a puddle is just a puddle!

### **3. Tree Gum**

Trees overhanging the road get a little over sapped during summer. In the winter rains the mixture of water and tree sap can form a slippery film, the perfect trap for the unwary motorcyclist!

### **4. Avoid wet leaves on the road**

In the fall, pay attention to the color and texture of the pavement ahead of you. If there are leaves on the pavement in your path of travel, and there's any possibility that they might be wet, try to avoid them or slow down far beyond normal. Wet leaves on the road surface can be extremely slippery.

### **5. Outfit yourself and your bike with heated gear**

Cold is probably one of the most dangerous conditions because it can lead to hypothermia if the rider isn't careful, and the real danger is that the effects can be difficult to recognize. Bear in mind that cold hands and feet don't react well. Wear heated clothing from head to toe to stay warm. Wear warm motorcycling boots. Most importantly, keep your feet dry! Some boots contain a waterproofing treatment on the outside, or a waterproof liner on the interior of the boot.

### **6. Stay Warm Insulate and wear layers**

Riding a motorcycle in cold weather comes down to one simple concept: insulation. Since most people aren't very active on a motorcycle, their body isn't doing much to produce heat on its own to counteract the cold. That means we have to do everything we can to insulate the body in order to keep what precious heat that we do produce actually on our body, and not floating off in the cold winter air.

Insulation boils down to two things: layers (to slow the rate at which our body loses heat), and wind proofing (to keep the wind from stealing our heat).

## Layers

Let's talk about layers first. Layers are critical for riding a motorcycle in the cold weather of winter. The number of layers you'll need to wear is based both on personal preference (some people naturally run a little hotter than others) and the temperature outside. I've worn up to four layers in really cold weather. The key is to have enough layers on that you feel comfortable (maybe even slightly warm) when you step outside and just stand in place (before you ride your motorcycle).

## Remember two things

- Your bottom layer should always be some type of snug fitting thermal or fleece underwear. This will create a warm layer of air between your body and this material. (Don't worry about buying the expensive wicking materials like Dri-Fit, etc. - you won't be sweating much so it won't do you much good)
- Don't wear so many layers that you lose mobility. If you can't hold your arms at your side because of all your clothing, than it's probably time to invest in either some warmer, or even heated, clothing.

Winter can be brutal for motorcyclists! Like any other type of machinery, you have difficulty in operating your vehicle. While cruising down country roads or interstate highways, the wind chill factors can make your experience nearly unbearable. Your body can instantly transform into a human icicle. Thus, you should take certain precautions to ensure that you and your motorcycle are aptly prepared for the wintertime. Here are some guidelines to help you achieve that goal:

### **7. Watch the weather forecast**

The key to fall motorcycle riding is to become a weather forecast addict, wear the proper riding clothing and gear, and keep alert for dangerous physical and environmental conditions. Keeping yourself tuned into the local weather forecast is important because you can predict what gear to wear and take with you. Always keep rain gear with you.

### **8. Avoid Hypothermia**

Hypothermia is caused by extended exposure to cold temperatures or a damp environment. Hypothermia is extremely dangerous when motorcycle riding because the symptoms aren't always noticed until a lethal mistake is made. Symptoms of mild hypothermia are: stumbling, mumbling, changes in motor coordination, having to think about control placement, missing gears, being wobbly at stops, hands may start feeling stiff and tight, and you may experience a slight shivering. If you experience any of these symptoms, stop immediately and warm up. If you are wet, try to dry off as best you can. Drink plenty of warm liquids and stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol and cigarettes, as they constrict blood flow. Stay in a warm environment until you can ride without any of the above symptoms.

### **9. Use a Windshield**

Using a windshield stops the cold air from hitting your chest directly, keeping more heat inside your jacket. This step is vital. The weather's wind chill factor can make a cold day, simply freezing. Use a windshield to safeguard yourself from such bitter-cold gusts.

### **10. Review road condition reports.**

It is vital that you are aware of the weather and road condition reports for the particular course that you will be taking. The farther away from home you drive, the more important it is to get the latest versions of these reports.

### **11. Keep an eye on motorcycle fluids**

Several types of motorcycle oils are available on the market. Which one is ideal for winter riding? The 10w-40w would be ideal for winter cruising. Also, if your motorcycle is of the liquid-cooled variety, verify that the anti-freeze reading is adequate for the temperature range in which you will be riding.

### **12. Keep your body covered and airtight**

Make sure that you expose none of your body to the winter air, or that cold air could penetrate your clothing easily. You can find specialized winter clothing that manufacturers designed for motorcyclists.

### **13. Keep your battery powered up**

Any battery is only useful if you have powered it up. Do some test runs to verify that your battery can withstand the rigors of icy gusts. In addition, use a Battery Tender to keep the battery charged.

### **14. Never sacrifice mobility for warmth**

When selecting your wintertime riding gear, avoid choosing gear that will hinder your overall mobility while cruising. For instance, bulky clothing and full-face types of helmets could prevent you from moving easily and freely.