



GreaseSpot #13 – Cold Weather Riding

The purpose of the 'GreaseSpot' is to share ideas and tips on 'two wheel vehicle' maintenance (Bicycle and Motorcycle). Questions, ideas and tips come from our fellow riders, and they can be on most any topic of maintenance. GreaseSpot #12 focused on 'Oiling other types of chains'; if you would like us to resend this GreaseSpot just let us know (info@greaseninja.com).

As all of us try each year to extend our riding season, most of us are now riding in temperatures below 50 degrees Fahrenheit; some of us are riding in temps much colder. If you are riding in 50+ degree weather, you are the lucky ones. For the riders in the northern PA and NY areas...geez! We recently attended a Cold Weather Riding Safety Workshop at Martin MotorSports located in Boyertown, PA and thought some of the highlights might be of interest to you.

The Cold Weather Riding Workshop focused on the new set of 'Rider Distractions' and 'Riding Conditions' that occur as a result of the colder temperatures. Rider Distractions are defined as anything that removes our "Eyes and Mind" from focusing on the road conditions. While we are always exposed to distractions, it is necessary to actively minimize distractions to keep our focus on the road. In a split second, a distraction can cause us to remove our concentration from the road, causing a crash.

The **Cold Weather Riding Distractions** can be categorized into two areas: Body Discomfort, and Gear Related.

Body Discomfort Distractions appear as we begin to feel pain:

- a) In our extremities (fingers and toes)
- b) From cold penetration (knees, neck, back, etc.)

The onset of discomfort is a major distraction and can also limit the degree / speed / flexibility of the motion we have in warmer temperatures. The first line of defense is to 'STOP THE WIND'. This can be done by:

- a) Wearing a full face helmet
- b) Utilizing a wind screen
- c) Utilizing hand guards
- d) Wearing gear that is resistant to wind penetration.

The second line of defense is to consider upgrading some of your gear to include electrical warming accessories such as: jackets, shirts, gloves, socks, pants, seats, hand grips, etc.

A few of the Gear Related Distractions are: Loose Clothing, Helmet Shield Fogging, and Increased Reaction Times for motorcycle equipment (levers, throttle, side stands, etc.) An example of a deadly distraction was the 'flapping collar' from the winter jacket that is constantly beating us on the neck. If our focus turns to the 'flapping collar', we are vulnerable to road condition dangers.

Road Conditions

There are obvious changes in the road conditions during cold weather riding such as increased road debris, snow/ice patches, salt dust, pothole gravel, etc. A couple of items discussed of particular interest were: significantly decreased tire traction and the hidden dangers of leaves.

Cold temperature decreases the air pressure in your tires, increases tire warm up times and reduces traction of cold rubber on cold pavement. With so many variables in air temperatures, tire rubber compounds, tire tread patterns, pavement types/textures and riding techniques the following guidelines were presented as good practices:

- 1) Check air pressures before riding and bring tire pressures to correct levels.
- 2) Switch to riding speeds, techniques, stopping distances as if you are on 'wet' pavement.
- 3) After riding; do a 'quick bare hand' temperature check of your tires (front and rear) to give you an idea of tire heat-up - you may be surprised.

Fallen Leaves are great camouflage for road hazards. Leaves collect in potholes and dry leaves often hide wet leaves. Wet leaves will exhibit the same traction levels as ice. For cars, braking distances are tripled on wet leaves...no information available for motorcycles, but it can't be good.