

KENOSHA HOG CHAPTER



Safety Article - Riding in the Rain

It is inevitable. No matter how much you check the radar and listen to multiple radio stations for the forecast, you will eventually get caught in the rain on your motorcycle. Whether you're in the group that have been in the rain before, or the one that will be in the future, you should keep in mind some basic riding tips when it's raining.

1. The oil, rubber particles, antifreeze and brake dust that cars leave behind becomes a slimy mess of slippery stuff as rain begins to wash it away. It's best if you can take a break, or delay your departure for the first 20 minutes or so after it starts raining. If it is just a light rain or misting, it could be slippery most of the day so be careful. If it hasn't rained in awhile, there's even more junk on the road that needs to be washed away.
2. Once you do start riding, stay in the left or right third of the road to avoid the oil dripping from the truck in front of you. On curves the road usually is sloped to the inside, so the oily water will drain to the low side and pool by the curb. Since oil floats on top of the wet road, you can watch for the rainbow color sheen or drops beading up on the roadway and avoid it.
3. Once the road has been washed clean, it has about 80 percent of the friction of a nice dry highway, so that means you still need to be about 20 percent more cautious! Start by slowing down and making gradual changes in speed and direction. Avoid the sudden stop if possible by anticipating the actions of the cars in front of you, stop lights, etc... Use more rear brake than normal so both front and rear share the braking equally. Do your braking while still in a straight line, and then ease into turns. Downshift smoothly by engaging the clutch slower than usual.
4. Painted or plastic road markings, metal manhole covers and railroad tracks are a piece of cake when dry, but become very slick when wet. Watch out for wet leaves in the fall piled up along the curbs too. Adjust your line when crossing slippery areas like railroad tracks to as close to 90 degrees as possible. Brick streets and graded bridges are also more hazardous in the rain.
5. Hydroplaning is when the water doesn't escape through the grooves of the tire fast enough, so the tire lifts up on top of the water and loses traction. If your tires are worn, they don't have the ability to channel the water away to either side. The harder it rains the more water on the pavement for the tire to channel away. Wider tires have more contact surface during dry weather, but can be more prone to Hydroplaning. Improper inflation is also a factor and can increase the chance of Hydroplaning. If you do feel the bike start to wander, slowly ease off the throttle and keep the front wheel straight until you find the speed needed to maintain control. Ride Safe!