



The Straight and Narrow

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 Rainy Days and Sundays



Yea, I know this article has nothing to do with Sunday's, but I just couldn't resist. I suppose it is that Old Hippie coming out in me.

Recently I was asked by a Chapter member to try and do some research and do an article on Riding in the Rain. Since the time of year is right for some rainy rides, I thought that it would be appropriate. So here we go.

Almost all riders get introduced to riding in the rain by accident. They start off on what is planned as an all day ride in the sun, but by afternoon they realize they're going to get their first taste of wet asphalt, like it or not. After a few days like this, we find ourselves not cringing at the very thought of the wet stuff, and some actually enjoy it.

Regardless if it is your first taste of the wet stuff, or if you have had many miles in it. We can refresh our minds a bit as to some of the major concerns.

Below are some things that might make your day a little more enjoyable.

Dress for the Ride- We should all have some good quality rain gear in the bikes at all times. Type and brand would be up to you, but if you have ever spent a day locked inside a cheap set of those rubber rain suits you will be more than happy to spend a couple of extra bucks for a good lightweight set.

Also good to have would be a pair of waterproof shoes or boots, though most of us won't carry it that far it would be nice to have on a rainy day. Another thing that most of us don't think of is a couple of clean dry towels. These can be used at rest stops to dry up those leaky spots in the rain gear.

Hazards to look for:

Painted Surfaces – Any painted surface is a hazard. Until the States can come up with a tackier texture you should be wary of ALL painted lines.

Crosswalks can be a touchy situation for motorcyclists, especially if you are turning right or left and crossing the lines at an angle. Slow down more than usual and make the turn straight up, rather than in a lean.

Roadway lines as well can be a little tricky, since we always are crossing them at an angle and usually at a pretty good speed. Pay close attention to these when you are changing lanes, and go between the lines if possible.

Surface Textures – A lot of the commercial and residential parking areas are paved with very smooth (slick) concrete. Add a little water into the mix, and it could get exciting. Again, ride slow and straight up and don't let that concrete get the best of you.

Tires – Of course we all want to save a little money by buying long lasting tires, but you might want to consider this. Most tires that boast of higher mileage are typically made of a harder compound, and are not as sticky and have less traction on wet surfaces. If riding in wet conditions is a big concern for you, you might want to consider looking for a softer/tackier one.

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Steel – Manhole covers, railroad tracks, and some bridge constructions on the road are a beast all unto their on self. Making a turn over the surface of these can be trouble. Avoid them if you can, or at least keep the bike straight up and cross slowly.

Railroad tracks often jump up just after a turn, and you may still be into your lean when you reach them. Keep an eye out for the crossing signs ahead of time, slow down, stay straight up, and cross at a right angle if possible.

Grated bridge crossings and metal plates are a nasty encounter in the rain. Observe the old standard of looking where you want to go, take it slow and don't try anything fancy. If possible avoid them.

Water –

Puddles and Pot Holes – This one can be one of those that you will remember for a long time. As you are cruising through a puddle and after it's too late, you realize you just went into a pot hole. As you are convinced that it is going to suck you into that rabbit hole with Alice, you realize that it is too late and will have to suffer the consequences. As recovery from this adventure of the bottomless pot hole is not always easy, it is best to just avoid puddles.

Oil – It's everywhere and very illusive. Those little red and blue rainbows on the ground mean danger. Ride slow and straight up. If you're caught in the first rain following a few dry days, there is a good chance that the roads are covered with a lot of oil and dirt. Most of this will be lifted from the surface in the first 30-60 minutes of a new rain. Make a rest stop and let Mother Nature do her clean up before continuing.

Road surfaces - Crowns and ruts on the road surfaces can be very treacherous. Deciding which track to ride in can be a hard choice. Sometimes the best choice is in the middle track, this is of course after the rain has had a chance to clear off the oil and debris that might have accumulated there. You will find that most secondary roads (and some freeways) will have ruts in the tracks which can contain standing water, sometimes as much as an inch or more. So, scope out the situation, consider all the factors, and make a deliberate decision to the best choice for YOU.

Some of the most important things to remember in a nut shell- Stay vigilant, continually watch road conditions and other vehicles.

Turns should be made straight up and slow (within reason).

Watch for painted surfaces and metal objects.

And as always, make sure that your equipment (the bike, tires, and brakes) are in good condition, and that YOU are ready for the ride.

These things along with being alert and properly trained can make even a rainy day an enjoyable ride.

Till next time Ride Safe, Have Fun, and Stay Dry

Dale

