

Rain Riding

Most riders get used to riding in the rain by accident. They takeoff on an all day ride when the sun is shining and by afternoon they realize they're going to get their first taste of wet asphalt, like it or not.

Here's a list of critical rain hazards to watch for and look for.

Painted Lines - Crosswalks can be unsafe for motorcyclists, particularly if you're 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. Ditto for **diamonds** in the HOV lanes. Very nasty when you lean into one, especially on the freeway. The diamond is shaped so you just slide across it and continue to slide along it.

Any painted line is a hazard. Until the DOT addresses the issue and comes up with a tackier texture you're the one in control of your destiny.

Surface Textures - Many commercial and residential parking areas are paved with very **slick concrete surfaces**. Your wet entry into the local mall or condo complex can put you on the ground in a second. Again, ride slow and straight up and don't let the concrete bite you.

Rubber - If you thought you might save some money by buying **long lasting tires**, think again. Such tires are typically not as tacky and have less traction when the rain comes out. Next time you change tires look for the tackiest one that will take care of you better during your northwest riding adventures. How about that **rubber they use around railroad tracks** to decrease the sound as cars drive over them? Forget those little circles on the surface, these provide zero traction to you as you cross. Slow and straight up.

Steel - Manhole covers are enemy number one and **railroad tracks** rank a close second. Making a turn over the surface of them sets you up for trouble. Avoid such, or keep the bike straight up and cross over it slowly.

Railroad tracks have a way of popping up on you just after a turn and you may still be into a lean when you reach them. Look for the crossing signs ahead of time, slow down and stay straight up when crossing.

Grated bridge crossings and **metal plates** are a nasty encounter in the rain. Look at where you want to ride, take it slow and don't try any fancy dancing, particularly a lane change.

Water - Puddles/Pot Holes - It only takes once to know how this one feels. You cruise through a puddle and after it's too late you realize you just went into a pot hole that wants to suck you into the underworld more painfully than Satan himself beating you down with a stick. Avoid puddles if you can. Use caution and predict the possibility ahead of time. Recovery from this rude awakening is not always easy. Pull over and take a few minutes of rest if you need to gather your wits.

Oil - It's everywhere and very illusive. Those little red and blue rainbows on the ground mean danger. Ride slow and straight up. As per the DOL's motorcycle

safety manual, if you're caught in the first rain following a few dry days remember the roads are covered with lots of oil and dirt that will be lifted from the surface in the first 30-60 minutes of a new rain. Take a coffee break if you can. Let the cars on the road wash some of the slick oil and dirt off the road surface, it may even stop raining and clear up again for you.

Gear - In an ideal situation, you'll have invested in some all weather riding gear including waterproof boots and if that's the case then good for you! The minimum investment you should have on hand when it comes to rain gear is waterproof gloves that fasten securely around your wrist. Not only do gloves keep your hands dry during a rainstorm, but they'll also help keep them warm too. Another option is purchasing a rain suit to wear over your leathers if you don't have all weather gear. Waterproof your boots prior to riding in the rain as an extra precaution. However if you still don't want to spend a few extra dollars on a rain suit and waterproofing boot spray, then another, albeit low-cost option is to wear a couple of large trash bags over your clothing and plastic grocery bags inside your boots wrapped around your socks to help with rain-proofing yourself. Riding in the rain is not fun, but it's even worse if you get soaked.

Visor Care - To help eliminate rain from building up on your visor and impairing your vision, there are a few products on the market you can apply prior to riding such as Rain-X. This product and products like it encourage the water to roll and bounce right off of the visor. Your visor may also indeed become foggy while riding in the rain and although there are products on the market to help prevent that too, just cracking your visor open a smidge every now and again will help quickly eliminate this problem.

Though motorcycle riders such as myself generally avoid riding in the rain at all costs for obvious reasons. One, it's not safe. Two, It's not fun. There is still that rare occasion that it may sneak up on you and leave you in a compromising situation. Be prepared and alert. Follow the tips listed in the above paragraphs. Reduce your speed, and if your with a group, open up your space cushion, so that you'll still be around to ride on future dry weather days as well!

Reference article from Soundrider

Patrick Thomas - Winter/01

Also

Shannon Duffy from Whybike.com

See you in my rear view,

Marc Shaffner

Safety Officer 2010