

Outfitting Bikes for Safety

Accessorizing our bikes adds to the enjoyment of owning them. We select our accessories for a variety of reasons, e.g., function, comfort, style, and, not the least important, safety. The purpose of this article is to focus on the safety aspects of our choices. Thinking about safety may lead to better choices and improved riding safety.

At Old Glory HD, accessories that you have installed on your new bike within sixty days of purchasing it carry the same warranty as the bike. It pays to think ahead about modifications or additions that you might want.

Let's start with buying a new bike. An early consideration is color. Dark colored motorcycles are very popular, but lighter and brighter colors are much more conspicuous. Highly visible colors help other vehicles see us. If we ride a dark bike, however, we can compensate some by equipping the bike with visibility enhancing lights, reflective items, etc. and by wearing highly visible attire.

Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) is now offered on an increasing number of models. It takes a skilled rider to be able to brake hard in an emergency without locking the wheels and skidding. ABS applies the brakes in a pulsating manner to avoid skids. It is worth having.

A good physical fit of a bike to its rider is important. A rider should be able to reach the bike's controls easily, ride with good posture in relative comfort, and stabilize the stopped bike with both feet flat on the ground. All of these things contribute directly or indirectly to the rider's safety. Old Glory's Fit Shop can provide guidance regarding modifications to your bike's suspension, seat, handlebars, and foot and hand controls that can make your bike fit you better.

A motorcycle's front lighting is critical when riding at night. The forward illumination of the headlamp can be significantly increased by switching to an LED headlamp. Auxiliary lights can also be replaced with LEDs for increased brightness. Low mounted fog lights can add light to the road.

Auxiliary lights provide increased illumination, especially to the sides of the road. The rider can turn the auxiliary lights on and off. However, the default wiring for auxiliary lights automatically turns them off when the high beam is engaged. The installation of an inexpensive wire harness kit can allow you more control of these lights including leaving them on with the high beam.

A common accident scenario is when a vehicle turns left directly in front of an oncoming bike. The driver frequently comments that he didn't "see" the motorcycle. The bike's lights can help address this problem. Conspicuous lights on the front of the motorcycle are more likely to be noticed by an oncoming driver than standard lighting.

The conspicuity of the standard headlamp can be greatly increased by installing a modulation kit that continually flashes the headlamp from full to low intensity. This feature can be turned off and does not function at night. This effective and inexpensive safety item makes your bike more visible and is highly recommended. Auxiliary lights also increase your visibility to oncoming vehicles. They make your bike appear wider and help oncoming drivers to more accurately assess your distance and rate of closure.

Conspicuous lighting on the rear of your motorcycle reduces the risk of a vehicle hitting you from behind. The standard rear lighting on a motorcycle frequently consists of a running light/brake light and two turn signal lights. An inexpensive conversion kit can allow the two turn signal lights to also function as running lights/brake lights. This approximately doubles your rear illumination when riding and braking.

Another controller can activate your running lights/brake lights so that they will flash automatically and then stay on as you apply your brakes. This flash helps alert the driver behind you that you are reducing speed. These inexpensive items are highly recommended. LED rear lights are also available. Their increased brightness provides additional safety. Accent lights and reflective items installed around your bike, on saddlebags, on tour-paks, etc. all increase your visibility and enhance your safety.

Your bike's mirrors are also of safety concern. Get mirrors that are large enough and properly located on your bike to provide you with a good view. Stem extenders are available. Split vision mirrors have part of the mirror convex shaped to provide a wider view. Small convex mirrors can be purchased separately and attached within the scope of your regular mirrors. Mirrors are also available with turn signal indicators on the outer edges. This allows a vehicle beside you to have an indication of your intent to turn or change lanes, when it may not be in a position to see your front or rear turn signals.

Sometimes you need to let a vehicle know of your presence by sounding your horn. An air horn can be installed on your bike that is significantly louder than the standard horn. You can also get a deer avoidance system which emits a sonic wave that allegedly alerts deer and other animals that your motorcycle is approaching.

In addition to the Harley-Davidson parts and accessories, there are many aftermarket parts available through other sources. The Parts Specialists at Old Glory HD have access to the various HD and aftermarket catalogs, and their expertise can help you locate the article you need in short order. After determining the exact item you want, an easy way to get it is to have the Parts Specialist order it for you. You can pick it up when it arrives or leave it with the Parts Department for installation the next time you bring your bike in for service. This saves you some effort. It also ensures that the ordered item is appropriate and compatible with your bike with respect to mounting space, electrical requirements, possible interference with other systems on your bike, etc.

How we outfit our bikes affects our safety. Let's make good choices.

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