

Preparing for Spring Riding

Spring is here and we are looking forward to spending more time on our bikes. It is a good time to think about safety. Things that come to mind include the riding environment, our bikes and gear, and us, the riders.

The riding environment is getting kinder as the warmer weather approaches. The ice is gone but, in the early spring, we must still be cautious about the remaining potholes and the loose sand on the roads. Also, drivers of other vehicles aren't used to seeing motorcycles on the road and it will take a while for them to get used to us again. Road construction will begin soon, which always warrants extra caution.

Regarding our bikes, we should ensure that they have been appropriately serviced and are ready to ride. We should also recommit ourselves to inspecting our bikes before each ride. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) T-CLOCS inspection routine is recommended, i.e., **T**ires and **W**heels, **C**ontrols, **L**ights and **E**lectrics, **O**il and **O**ther **F**luids, **C**hassis, and **S**tands. Details of the T-CLOCS inspections are available in the Library/Safety Tips section on the MSF website: www.msf-usa.org.

Now is also a good time to think about how we can make our bikes safer by adding more and brighter lighting, better mirrors, a louder horn, etc. Some recommendations in this regard are in the article *Outfitting Bikes for Safety* in the Safety section of the Members Only section of our Old Glory HOG Chapter website: www.oldgloryhog.com.

Safety also concerns our gear and we might ask ourselves: Is it time to replace my helmet? Has it been dropped or abused or is it over three years old? Should I consider upgrading my riding apparel for something that provides more protection and/or conspicuity?

How about the rider? Riding skills can deteriorate after several months of inactivity. Refresh those skills with parking lot practice in braking, swerving, cornering, low speed control, etc.

Consider going beyond just renewing your riding skills; make a conscious decision to improve them during the coming riding season. Improving our riding skills increases the enjoyment of riding and has a direct bearing on safety. When control of the bike becomes instinctive and automatic, even during crash avoidance maneuvers, then the rider can concentrate on defensive riding.

Take an advanced riding course. There are several available. Read the Safety articles on the Old Glory HOG Chapter website, the MSF website, and some of the excellent books on riding skills and safety that are available. Books by David L. Hough (*Proficient Motorcycling*, *More Proficient Motorcycling*, *The Good Rider*) and Pat Hahn (*Maximum Control*; *Ride Hard, Ride Smart*) are available on www.amazon.com and are highly recommended.

The beginning of the riding season is also a good time for a realistic self assessment. How is my physical condition? Would my riding be more enjoyable and safer if I make some effort to improve my strength, stamina, and flexibility? How are my eyes? Am I due for a vision examination and maybe new glasses? How is my attitude? Maybe it is time for me to take my safety more seriously. Refreshing my knowledge of defensive riding techniques and consciously applying them at all times on every ride would make me safer. Maybe I should recommit myself to doing it.

Spring is here. Let's get ourselves ready, let's ride and enjoy it, and let's do it safely.

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