

# Riding in Inclement Weather

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This month, we are going to talk about something that every motorcyclist has been faced with at one point or another in their riding career, riding in inclement weather. **Someone once told me that there is no such thing as a bad day riding, only poor wardrobe choices!** We are fortunate in Florida because we do not have to store our bikes for the winter; we can ride year round. That makes our state an attraction for motorcyclists from around the nation as can be evidenced at events like Bike Week and Thunderbeach. The reality is that while our state is great for riding, if you wait for the perfect day, you won't get much saddle time.

Since we have begun our winter (believe it or not!) let's start with what to do in cold weather. The key to cold weather riding is dressing in layers. As the day warms with the increasing temperature, it makes it possible to take off layers to not get overheated. It is important to stay comfortable and to avoid hypothermia. If you have ever been in a situa-

tion where you were not prepared for the cold weather but rode anyway, you may remember that at some point, you were no longer thinking about riding or the cages around you, you were thinking about getting warm. You were a distracted rider which means your perception time had decreased. As your body cooled, your body movements slowed and your ability to react to an event decreased. That was a recipe for disaster!

Some ways to help you stay warm, along with breaking out the leathers, is to consider wearing fleece headgear under your helmet to keep heat from escaping through your head. They are inexpensive, easy to store, can cover your face, and tuck into your jacket to help keep that cold wind from entering around your neck. You might also consider buying the hand warmers used by hunters to put inside your gloves and boots to keep your hands and feet warm. Of course, you could always go high-tech and get a heated suit that plugs into your bikes electrical system to keep you warm!



The opposite condition is riding in the heat. We have plenty of that here in the Sunshine State! The dangers of riding in the heat are heat exhaustion and sunburn. This can be offset by sunscreen and a long sleeved shirt and taking frequent breaks. The shirts worn by fishermen are great for protection from the sun and they are vented to allow wind flow to help keep you cool. .Drink plenty of water or sports drinks to replenish the electrolytes lost while sweating. Be aware of dizziness, cramps, dry mouth, or a headache.

More than likely, weather (pun intended) or not you wanted to do it, at one time or another, you ended up

riding in the rain. One thing to consider when you get caught in a shower is that the road surface is most slick during the first 10-20 minutes of rainfall. That is due to the oil and dirt mixing with the rain water. It may be best to find a place to sit and wait for a while which will also provide you with an opportunity to don your rain suit. My experience has been that as soon

as I get my suit on, the rain stops. But it gave me something to do while I was stopped.

The most important thing to remember is to ride to your level of comfort. If riding in inclement weather makes you nervous, then wait for the weather to change. It won't take too long and you will have a more pleasurable ride. If you are in a group, don't be pressured to ride beyond your comfort or skill level. Ride your own ride.

One last thought, you may want to check the weather on-line before you head out the door to a bike event. That way you won't show up at a destination with all your riding buddies wondering why you were the only one on a motorcycle. Head and eyes!

Mark.