

It rains in the Northwest.

It wasn't too long ago, I was writing and wondering when riding season ever will get here. . . . Well the season is here and soon will be gone again. Gone; unless you see most any opportunity to ride as an extension of riding season. So for you extended season riders, I have put together a two article series covering the hazards and safety tips for riding in wet and cold weather. This article will focus on wet weather riding, the risks and tips to mitigate them. It is also for those of you who don't intend to ride in the rain, but find them doing it anyway because a perfect day for a ride turned stormy. So if you are rain warrior or a rain worrier, please use this article to improve your knowledge and skills.

As I often do, I am using other folk's information liberally. Today, I have excerpted information from Sound Rider and blogs from cycletimes.com

Hazards (from Sound Rider):

Many never ride in the rain the first year they're up on two wheels. They're timid about it the second year, feeling more confident by the third and by the fourth year they're asking the question - "What Rain?"

So suppose you're thinking about getting on a wet road for the first time, or perhaps you've done it a few times, or perhaps you do it so much you're not thinking about what the hazards are.

Here's a list of critical rain hazards I like to watch for and look for even after 31 years of riding.

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 pothole that wants to suck you into the underworld more painfully than Satan himself beating you down with a stick does. 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.

Preparation:

Remember you can prepare yourself to ride in the rain before you go out. Having raingear on your bike and make sure your tires are inflated correctly is a great way to start. Properly inflated tires extend your traction. The lower the tire pressure the lower the traction, particularly in curves and turns. (Can you say T-CLOCK?)

Mitigation:

Now that you know the types of wet weather hazards, what are some things you can do while riding to mitigate them? Try these straightforward and simple steps:

Use smooth throttle controls and start deceleration earlier before the turn than you would do on dry pavement'

Use brakes carefully and together. This will keep you from going too far over on your tires; remember traction is already reduced and the further you lean the less traction you have. Use your brakes to help.

Remember your body position. Keep your head up and horizontal. Let the bike move under you. Be an active participant with the bike.

Skids may happen. Keep calm, keep riding and slow down. Braking is not a good idea, ride it out. Keep it smooth. . . .

At one time or another, we will find ourselves riding in the rain. Keep these tips in mind and you will have safer and enjoyable ride.

Ride safe and ride well.

Bob Reagle, Chapter Educator