

Safety Tips #26

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Are You HOT???

Summer's on the way, and we look forward to lots of great riding this season. But riding in hot weather presents special challenges for the motorcycle rider.

When our body temperatures get too high we can suffer. Yes, we can be slightly uncomfortable, but that's least of our worries. More importantly if the situation continues we will manifest both physical and mental problems that can be nothing short of dangerous. Mentally, we will be dealing with a loss of concentration and ability to think clearly. Physically we will have to deal with such issues as cramps, headaches and nausea. Some of these are due directly to heat and some to dehydration, but in the end, problems are problems.

Of course the best way to deal with heat and dehydration is to avoid them. Experienced travelers know to travel at times of the day when the ambient temperature is lower, such as at night or early morning. It's cooler at higher elevations, so if you have a choice of routes, consider a higher road.

If you are going to be riding in hot weather, here are some things you can do to mitigate the problems heat and dehydration can cause. Stay hydrated! Drink lots of water, and stay away from beverages that actually cause your body to eliminate water, such as alcoholic beverages, soda pop, coffee and tea. Consider using a water bladder as you ride, such as a Camelbak or similar product. You can sip water as you ride. Drink enough water so that you

don't ever feel thirsty, because once you feel thirsty you are behind the power curve.

Keep the sun and hot breeze off your skin. Yes, even in the heat, cover up. Not long ago I bought one of those mesh riding jackets. It's wonderful! It actually feels noticeably cooler to wear this jacket in hot weather than to wear no jacket at all. If you don't have one of those jackets, wear a lightweight shirt, preferably light in color as well.

Try an evaporative cooler/bandanna. They have crystals sewn inside them that absorb water and keep your neck cool. These things are effective.

When at rest/gas stops, open up your jacket and wet down your shirt, then close your jacket again. When you begin riding again you will feel much cooler.

Many great rides can be done in hot weather if the proper precautions are taken. Enjoy!