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Motorcycle Safety Tips

The Spring Tune Up

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The sun is out, the days are longer, there are plenty of daylight hours after work to go and ride. Oil and filter change – check; tires properly inflated – check; battery charged – check. The bike is ready for another season on the road. Are you?

Pilots have to keep current on their flying skills; doctors, lawyers, accountants, mechanics all participate in continuing education to stay sharp in their fields. What do you do to develop and maintain your mental and physical riding skills? We all know that riding a motorcycle requires special skills beyond those needed to drive a car. We also know that the consequences for making a mistake on a motorcycle can be much more severe. What many of us do not realize is that our skills in the most critical maneuvers (keeping our eyes up and well ahead, cornering, braking, and swerving) are not improved simply by putting in the miles. The only way to develop and maintain those specific skills is to practice those specific skills.

Research indicates that most accidents are the result of rider error (and not a result of car drivers). That’s right folks – we have met the enemy and he is US! So, just as we take the time and energy to prepare our bikes – we need to take some time and spend some energy preparing ourselves.

Find an off street location where you can practice maximum braking and obstacle avoidance (swerving); practice your mental skills while you are driving or riding with the “what would I do if…” exercise; discipline yourself to look well ahead and especially to look as far as possible though turns when cornering. Or come out and take a rider training class (Idaho *STAR* offers classes at the basic and experienced rider level). None of us want to find ourselves saying to ourselves after an ‘unfortunate incident,’ “Yeah, I knew I should have worked on my skills some before that big bike trip (or even that short bike trip!).”

Hindsight is 20/20, but it can be a tough way to learn a lesson. Let’s make preventing those ‘unfortunate incidents’ our goal. Enjoy the riding season (and keep the rubber side down!)

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