



Slippery When Wet or Dry?

By: Greg Smith, Sr. Road Captain



Fall has arrived and will soon award us with its beautiful colors. There is no better way to experience and enjoy these colors than riding a motorcycle on the open roads.

However, Fall also presents us with its own unique set of road hazards. Being aware of them and watching out for them is critical.

Fall brings beautifully colored leaves and wonderful smells of harvest. That's the good side of fall that we love and look forward to. The other side of that coin is the leaves falling, covering roads and harvest season with its busy time for farmers and their equipment.

The first thing we need to be aware of and understand is our Contact Patch. This is the location point at which our tire meets the road. With a motorcycle, the contact patch is only a few square inches under each tire. This means as a motorcycle rider you cannot afford to have anything between your tire and the pavement effectively eliminating our contact patch. In the fall, such things as leaves, dirt clumps, seeds, grains and loose gravel are more common.

Leaves hold moisture and as they start to decay, they generate more moisture. The leaves on the top of a patch or pile may appear to be dry and blowing around. However, the leaves underneath, on the road surface, may be wet and starting to decay causing very slippery oil-like conditions. When riding you always try to avoid oil on the road. Likewise, you should do your best to avoid leaves.

Falling leaves can also cover and camouflage road hazards. What may appear to be a small pile of leaves may not be a pile at all but in fact, a few leaves covering an obstruction on the road such as a rock, stick, or chunk of asphalt. Patches of leaves may also cover other serious road obstructions such as potholes, large cracks, and uneven road surfaces.



During harvest, farmers are pulling their equipment in and out of the fields leaving long tracks of dirt and mud from their tires on the roads. They are also loading and hauling corn and beans that often spill out on the roads. Riding a motorcycle through such a spill can be very dangerous. This material on the roads, either wet or dry, is like riding over small marbles.



The best thing to do while enjoying all the beauty of a fall ride is to make an effort to avoid riding through those tempting piles and patches of leaves. Keep alert for corn and grains that may have fallen from farm wagons or trucks. Avoid any mud and dirt tracks on the roads from the farm equipment. Most of all enjoy the uniqueness of fall, ride safe, and get out there and take in those fall smells and see those beautiful colors!