



Kaution Korner May, 2025

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As we are heading deeper into spring riding season and mother nature is really starting to throw out some curveballs, here are some weather-related topics to consider.

Prepare for Inclement Weather

Springtime is notorious for suddenly changing weather patterns, including unexpected showers and storms. This can be incredibly dangerous for motorcyclists. Wet, slick roadways can cause slide-outs and low side crashes, as well as other dangerous accidents. Additionally, heavy rain can significantly limit visibility, putting motorcyclists at an even higher risk than usual.

Here are a few ways you can prepare for—and stay safe in—inclement weather:

Make sure you have the right gear. You'll want to wear waterproof clothing that is highly visible to others on the road. You should also make sure your hands and feet are properly covered with waterproof gloves (A pair of latex gloves inside your non-waterproof gloves can make a huge difference) and boots, and you should always wear appropriate protective eyewear. An anti-fog face shield can make all the difference when riding in the rain.

Slow down! When riding in inclement weather, reduce your speed and cover the brake to ensure that you are able to safely slow down or stop when needed. It's also a good idea to lengthen your riding distance to about 8 – 10 seconds behind the vehicle in front of you.

Keep an eye on extra-slippery areas of the road, such as the center track at stop signs or lights, painted lines, manhole covers, metal bridges, railroad crossings, and tar snakes. When wet, asphalt becomes slicker, as well, which is why you should reduce your speed and drive with caution in or just after a period of rain. It's also important that you watch for puddles and avoid them whenever you can. Utilize dry lines, like car tracks, when possible.

Make sure your bike is properly equipped. Ensure your motorcycle's tires are relatively new and/or not worn and that they have the proper tire pressure (PSI) before you ride. You should also make sure your headlight and taillight are working, as well as all other parts of your bike. It's smart to get a full motorcycle tune-up at the beginning of the season to make sure everything is in good, working condition.

Really severe weather - Lightning

Many years back, Noelle and I were just heading out to help set up at the "Ride For Dreams" event, which was being held in Woodstock. It started to rain just as we were leaving our garage. We had a feeling it was going to rain even though the weather report sounded more promising, we dressed accordingly.

This was by no means the first time we ever rode in the rain as I know most everyone reading this article has experienced this as well.

Well on this particular day, as we moved down the road through the rain, it started raining harder, but eventually started to ease up and we thought we may be in the clear as we sat waiting for a traffic light to change, when all of a sudden the rumble of a nearby, lightning strike shook both of us, not only physically, but mentally as well. Sitting in the rain, exposed, with an electrical storm building, to me, is an intimidating thing and I felt very vulnerable.

Talking about this situation and hearing many people compare riding exposed ON a motorcycle to the old traditional thought of being protected from lightning while riding IN a car, I started to research how true this thought truly is.

As you can imagine, there is a great deal of information about this on the internet, which you can Google and see firsthand. Here is an article which is just a portion of the information I found on-line, and I would suggest you further research.

“Electrical Storms Riding out from under them could be a big mistake”
By: James R. Davis

“No doubt you have heard that because your tires are made of rubber, and because rubber is not a good electrical conductor, so long as you keep your feet on the pegs lightning will not hit you since it cannot find a path to ground through you and the bike. WRONG!!!

Though rubber is a pretty good insulator at the normal voltage levels we mere humans deal with, it is not very effective against the voltage in a lightning bolt.

On the other hand, you may also have heard that if a lightning bolt hits a car the occupants are safe because the car is riding on rubber tires, etc. Actually, this is almost true! So long as the occupants stay away from anything metal they will more than likely survive a lightning hit without any injury whatever.

What protects occupants of a cage is not their rubber tires, but the fact that they are enclosed in a metal container. If a lightning bolt hits the surface of the car it spreads around the occupants, NOT THROUGH THEM, and goes to ground.

A lightning bolt that hits you or your motorcycle is a different matter entirely.

Let me give you an idea of magnitudes we are dealing with here. The master fuse on your bike handles about 30 amps before it blows. An average lightning bolt produces a current of about 20,000 amps. Even 30 amps can easily kill you because it disrupts your heart's electrical system and the heart then simply stops working. Your heart doesn't stand a chance against a lightning bolt.

Anyway, if you are out in the open on your bike when lightning flashes begin, and if you can hear the thunder caused by those flashes in less than three seconds from when you see the flash, it's time to stop your bike and get off it. Immediately find low ground, but NOT under a single or small group of trees.

Squat on the ground with your legs together, head lower than back, but NOT touching the ground. Do NOT lay on the ground.

LET YOUR CLOTHES GET WET!!! (In this way, if you are hit the majority of the electricity will follow the moisture of your wet clothes around your body.)

Do not get up until thunder following a lightning flash is AT LEAST five seconds after the flash. (Which means the lightning struck more than 1 mile away.)

Incidentally, lightning can, and DOES, hit the same place twice - frequently.

If there are more than 5 seconds between the lightning flashes and your hearing that thunder, head for shelter. This is the only time trying to ride out from under an electrical storm makes any sense.

Best shelter, of course, is a hard covered surface connected to ground with metal. Get under it and wait out the storm.

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(James R. Davis is a recognized expert witness in the fields of Motorcycle Safety/Dynamics.)

I hope this article helped to educate, inform and motivate further research at least to the point that you are comfortable, as I feel it is better to hear news you may not want to hear from yourself, just as the folks with the hardest heads, are less likely to wear a helmet.

Oh, by the way, Noelle and I rode back home after hearing the thunder and drove our car to the event and eventually were able to bring our bikes out, though too late for the actual ride, it was a nice afternoon to enjoy the good weather and safely ride back home.

Really severe weather - Hail

Just don't... Small hail can lead to big hail and of course not only hurt you directly by hitting you, it can also make the road extremely slippery. Best option is to look for a place to get out of the storm, if not for you and your bike, at least you. It will pass and eventually you can make your way back out on the road... safely.

As we say at GRASS class, "It Never Hurts To Ride Safe"

Stay safe
Gene "Lucky" Rigsby...
Looking forward to seeing you there