

Protecting your Bike- Steve Warmath, Safety Officer



This may sound a little strange, I know. Let me explain. After our February chapter meeting, I was browsing in the apparel section of the showroom when a fellow member approached me to strike up a conversation. He started by saying, "You know, all of your safety articles and briefs are about riding safely and protecting ourselves." He continued, "What about the bike?" I wasn't really clear on exactly what he meant. So, I said to him, "Ok, tell me more." He looked me square in the eye and said, "My dog ate my bike." Hmm..... (Oh boy, here we go.)

"Your dog ate your bike? That must have been hard to swallow." He said, "No, really. I left my dog outside with the bike to keep someone from stealing my battery charger. I wasn't concerned about the bike being stolen. I guess he (the dog) got mad and decided to chew up my seat and portions of exposed wiring harnesses." I replied, "Oh, thank goodness. For a second, I thought he may have eaten the whole thing!" He said

his point was that he didn't do enough to protect his bike from damage by leaving it outside with the dog. I tried to comfort him by saying, "Well, generally, I don't think most people would think about protecting their bike from being eaten by a dog."

His other major complaint was that he had just gotten his bike back from other repairs done and had to take it right back after the dog got through with it. I asked him nervously, "Do you still have a dog?" Thankfully, he said the dog was spared but only after a short period of serious deliberation. Although this is somewhat of an obtuse example, (and I'm not making this stuff up) it does bring to mind that we should protect our bikes in other ways. Do you ever pat you bike on the seat after a nice ride and say "Thanks for a nice, safe ride." Well, sure, we all do it. That takes care of the emotional and mental health side; we also have to deal with the physical side, particularly in the coldest and hottest months. "Protecting your bike" is another way of saying "taking care of and maintaining your bike." Additionally, keeping the rubber side down "protects" your bike from damage. So let's take a brief look at some other things we can do in both cold and hot weather.



Bad Dog!

Cold Weather

- Winter places a real burden on your battery since it has to work harder to start the bike, and short trips, especially if they are taken at low speeds, might not allow it to fully recharge. Add-on electrics, in particular heated riding gear or high wattage running lights, will exacerbate the situation. So if the battery has been a little sluggish, replace it before the cold weather sets, and always plug into a maintenance charger between rides.
- Engines used in cold weather should use reduced viscosity oils. Lighter oil decreases the effort needed to start the bike and allows for a quicker warm-up. Follow the recommended viscosity/ oil type for the expected operating temperature range.
- Borderline worn tires won't be of much use on cold, damp, slippery roads. Replace those worn-out skins and maintain proper tire inflation at all times.
- Keep the gas tank full and use a fuel stabilizer to help prevent condensation in the tank.

Hot Weather

- Many riders love to go to bike rallies, special events and participate in parades. These activities can result in bumper to bumper, slow moving, stop and go traffic. Big V-Twin air-cooled engines need a lot of air moving across them to stay cool enough to be bearable. If you have ever "cooked" your engine under these circumstances it is not only very hot on your body, but it could be very bad for your engine. Under high heat stress the engine oil can reach temperatures over 300 degrees. At these high temperatures you may actually see engine oil pressure drop to zero (0). If your engine starts to smoke, it could be that the oil is becoming so thin that it is getting by the rings and could possibly damage the pistons. There may be other not so obvious problems with generally exposing metal parts, seals and other components to this high

temperature abuse. Although these engines are designed to withstand high heat conditions, you may not want to test the limits of the design. If things get this heated, pull off and let things cool down.

- Leather seats baking in the hot Florida sun can not only burn your buns, but can also dry out leather, damage and discolor other materials as well. Condition these leathery areas with the recommended products to prevent cracking and discoloration. Everyone wants a “new” looking bike.
- There are two times a year that really “bug” me. It is “love bug” season, usually in May and September. (Handy Tip: If you have an open helmet and no windshield, best keep your mouth shut while riding.) These little flying fornicators must have a combination of super glue and acid for blood. They stick like glue and if left on, may damage the paint finish and stain aluminum and chrome. Protect the finishes on the bike. One of the most magical ways to remove these guys is with dryer fabric softener sheets. They work amazingly fast and really clean up the mess. As I have said in other articles, a clean, well maintained bike is a safe bike. If you spend the time to routinely and thoroughly clean your bike, you are also conducting a detailed inspection of areas you may not normally look in.



You can “Protect your bike” by taking care of it. It will not only hold its value and look great riding down the road but it will return years of service to the loving owners that we HOGs tend to be. At the end of the day, give it pat on the seat and say “Thanks for a safe, enjoyable ride.”

You can also “protect” your bike from being stolen. There are a lot of ideas on how to do this, but here are a few pointers to consider.

Protection from Theft- If you have a motorcycle and you are afraid that it will get stolen, consider some steps in protecting it. These suggestions are not fool proof, because a thief who really wants your bike will most likely get it eventually. However, your objective should be to create enough deterrents so that the thief gives up trying. The best way to protect your motorcycle from theft is to incorporate as many of the following steps as possible.

- **Take advantage of your bike's built-in lock, but only as an extra obstacle for thieves.** Even though these locks are easy to break into, they should still be used in conjunction with other methods of protection.
- **Include disc brake locks as part of your protection against thieves stealing your motorcycle.** Disc brakes are attached so that thieves cannot ride your bike away.
- **Make it difficult for motorcycle thieves to steal your bike by creating mechanical deterrents.** For example, you can pull a fuse, loosen a spark plug cap, or shut off the gas. Hopefully, the thieves will assume that your bike is broken, or they may just give up trying to figure out the issue.
- **Connect a concealed kill switch on to your bike so a potential bike thief will have to search for it to start the bike.** A kill switch has to be pressed while the rider starts the bike.
- **Park your motorbike out in the open and in a busy location if you are out and about.** Ideally, leave it where you can see it if you are going into a restaurant. At home, be sure to park your motorbike in a discreet location if you don't have a garage at home. You might want to cover the bike with a tarp, especially if you have invested a lot of money into fixing up your bike. You don't want interest to turn into temptation. If possible, park it somewhere that is not easily accessible. If it's hard to get to or move the bike from, it will be less of a target. The little extra inconvenience to you can be worth it.
- **Attach and lock your motorbike to a stationary object if possible.** Another option would be to link your wheels to a friend's bike with a chain.
- **Don't ever leave your motorcycle running, even for a few moments.** It only takes a few seconds for someone to jump onto your bike and ride off. Don't hide your keys anywhere on your bike either.

Until next month.....“Be careful out there....it’s a jungle.” *Steve*