

Safety Tidbits

By Mark Caldwell

As I was preparing to write this month's Educator's article, I took some time to thumb through the latest (January 2005) edition of Wing World. And what do you know, but there are a couple of articles in there worth highlighting. First, you probably recall over the summer that we printed a series about safety and tire pressure that was provided to us by the folks from SmarTire. In Wing World this month, on page 26, they have a review of the SmarTire product. And even more importantly, on page 28, there is information regarding a SmarTire recall. If you purchased their product, you have probably already been notified, but in case not, be sure to read the notice in Wing World and take appropriate steps to ensure your product functions properly.

Also in this Wing World is the first in a series that will be running throughout 2005 on Cornering Practice. I highly recommend you read it and take some time to practice for yourself. In the Workbench section of Wing World this month is some information on storing your motorcycle for the winter or longer term. And on page 54 is an article about taking care of your riding gear which brings me to my other topic: **Visibility**.

A couple of years ago I went in search of new riding gear and decided to buy a bright yellow jacket which I figured would be more visible in the daytime, and it had reflective stripes on it for night use. Over the last couple of years of riding in all kinds of weather, it has gotten dirty and so it blends in with the background more than it used to. I need to take the advice of this article and clean it up to restore the visibility. Maybe you need to do that too?

And on that subject of reflective striping, please, be sure to wear some. I don't care how brightly colored your clothing is, in the dark you're just a shadow. And that goes triple if it's raining. I noticed during the summer that whether on my bike or in my car, I would see people walking across the street in front of me and it's not until I'm just about to pass them that I see they were wearing a white T-shirt and jeans. They probably thought, like I used to, that a white shirt would stand out at night. It doesn't, at least nowhere nearly as well as reflective striping. And if they are wearing a black leather jacket, well, let's just say that sometimes I only see their silhouette as they pass in front of other cars' headlights. (And I have excellent eyesight, so don't even go there.)

I know some of you are thinking, "yeah, but on my Gold Wing it's so lit up they can't help but see me." Yeah, maybe...maybe not. Are you willing to bet your life on it? What if you go down and are lying in the street away from your bike? Is there anything on your body to reflect the headlights of oncoming cars so they don't run over you and finish off what the fall started? Today there are so many options ranging from clothing already striped or piped with reflective material to designer reflective clothing to safety-orange reflective vests. You can even get reflective striping and have it added to your clothing wherever you like. That's what I did with my riding pants that did not have enough reflection. Now I have a long stripe going down the outside of each leg, and it looks like it was made that way from the beginning.

Keep your skills sharp, take care of the gear that takes care of you, stay visible, and ride safe.

Remember to bring your questions for David Hough in January!