

Rider Education

By Jim Roberson

October, start of fall, start of the rainy season; two of the many reasons to get yourself and your motorcycle well prepared if you do choose to ride.

One of the blessings of living in the Northwest is the ability to ride year round. With fall upon us you need to prepare yourself by dressing for the current weather as well as for the possible change in weather later in the day. You also need to make sure that you have water and a snack to replenish the energy that the cooler weather saps from your body. Evaluate your mental attitude for the ride and cut the length of your ride back. With daylight getting shorter, squeezing in a few more miles may result in a daylight ride turning into a dark night return. Not a good idea this time of year.

Your motorcycle needs extra attention as well. It has served you well during the summer and now it's being called upon to serve in a potentially more hostile environment. While performing your usual "TClock" check, make sure that you pay particular attention to your tires and brakes. Also, ensure that you let the engine warm up before heading out.

With the rain, the roads become more treacherous and those lovely leaves turn into highly polished slick spots on the wet roads. They also tend to pile up and become small mounds of slickness waiting for the inattentive rider.

The wind can also be a factor as it begins to pick up at this time of year. With the wind, the temperature may also drop. If your ride takes you to higher altitudes, you may run into roads with frost on them and possibly an early snowfall. More reasons to be at the top of your game and be even more vigilant to everything around you. While the changing leaves may be tempting, the roads and weather might combine to ruin your whole day in an instant.

Not that this cannot be a great time of year to get out and ride. A motorcycle ride almost always is preferable to riding in a car. But the key thing to remember is to be prepared and don't try to be "super macho". If it looks bad, don't do it and live to ride another day. Above all, if you do choose to ride, ride safe!