

Be Safe on your Bike This Winter

Winter is a hazardous season for even the most experienced bikers with low visibility, icy roads and extreme conditions - making it crucial to take extra precautions to prevent accidents.

But while some bikers may prefer to pack their motorcycle away into storage for the winter months, there's no reason why you can't bike all year round - as long as you act responsibly.

In fact, new figures show that 156,000 (*) more bikes were kept taxed and ready for use throughout winter 2008 compared to five years ago; this equates to a third less bikes being taken off the road.

Rise in risk of accidents

If you are one of the growing band of hardy riders planning to go biking over the next few months, you do need to take care, as the risk of accidents increases in poor weather conditions.

According to Government figures, 8 per cent (**) of motorcycle crashes in 2008 were caused by poor grip on slippery roads due to bad weather, while 1 per cent (**) of crashes were caused because the rider suffered reduced visibility due to rain, sleet, snow or fog.

"Winter riding brings its own unique challenges," says Sheila Rainger from the Motor Cycle Industry Association (MCIA). "Riders and drivers alike need to be more vigilant for everyone's safety, and give each other a little more consideration."

Stay safe on the road

The good news is there are some simple steps you can take to stay safe on the roads during the winter:

- ● Turn your lights on before it is dark - but don't dazzle on high beam.
- ● Reduce speed in adverse weather conditions such as fog, rain and ice.
- ● Check your mirrors regularly.
- ● Don't intimidate other road users - give each other space when road conditions are poor.

Get ready for winter riding

You also need to sure you are properly equipped for riding in poor weather conditions by being seen and being warm.

You can increase your visibility by wearing reflective clothing such as a fluorescent jacket, and you can ensure you stay warm on the road by purchasing winter kit which offers better protection from the elements.

Give your bike a winter health-check

It's always advisable to perform a quick overall inspection of your motorcycle before starting a ride, and this is especially important now that winter has set in.

While giving your bike the once-over won't guarantee against a failure of some sort, it will increase your odds of finding problems before they become dangerous or fatal.

The AA recommends what is referred to as the "T-CLOCK" inspection:

- ● Tyres and wheels - check your tyres for proper air pressure and tread depth, and check your wheels for dents and cracks.
- ● Controls - check all levers to ensure they're not broken, bent, cracked or loose.
- ● Lights and electrical - check your battery, making sure the terminals are clean and that it is properly secured; also check all other lights and reflectors for operation.
- ● Oil and fluids - check oil and fluid levels, including brake and clutch fluid, coolant and petrol.
- ● Chassis - check the condition of the frame, looking for cracks, dents or bends and check the chain or belt for proper tension, lubrication and wear.
- ● Kickstand - check the side-stand and centre-stand; make sure they are not cracked or bent, and that they spring into place.

Plan your journey

Before embarking on any journey, spend a few minutes checking out the weather forecast and road conditions; this is particularly important if you plan to ride a long way from home. Also allow extra time for journey to avoid having to rush

Check your cover

There's no reason why you can't continue biking during the winter months as long as you take extra care and precautions - and provided you have adequate [motorbike insurance](#), including comprehensive breakdown cover.

With the right policy in place, you can go on indulging in your passion safe in the knowledge that should an accident happen, you have cover tailored to your needs.

Notes:

(*) Motor Cycle Industry Association

(**) Department for Transport

About the Author

To read more about [motorbike insurance](#) please visit <http://www.confused.com/motorbike-insurance>

Source: <http://wisdomwriters.articlefacility.com>