



Old Town HOG Safety Program

I think we can all relate to this - drew

Rain Riding

I'll Take Mine Straight Up and Slow Please

Most riders get used to riding in the rain by accident. They takeoff on an all day ride when the sun is shining and by afternoon they realize they're going to get their first taste of wet asphalt, like it or not. Those who accept it soon find themselves venturing back into the rain, sometimes at their own will.

Riding in the Northwest has a cycle with some. Many never ride in the rain the first year they're up on two wheels. They're timid about it the second year, feeling more confident by the third and by the fourth year they're asking the question - "What Rain?"

So suppose you're thinking about getting on a wet road for the first time, or perhaps you've done it a few times, or perhaps you do it so much you're not thinking about what the hazards are.

Here's a list of critical rain hazards I like to watch for and look for even after 31 years of riding.

Painted Lines - Crosswalks can be unsafe for motorcyclists, particularly if you're turning right or left and crossing the lines at an angle. Slow down more than usual and make the turn straight up, rather than in a lean.

Ditto for **diamonds** in the HOV lanes. Very nasty when you lean into one, especially on the freeway. The diamond is shaped so you just slide across it and continue to slide along it.

Any painted line is a hazard. Until the DOT addresses the issue and comes up with a tackier texture you're the one in control of your destiny.

Surface Textures - Many commercial and residential parking areas are paved with very **slick concrete surfaces**. Your wet entry into the local mall or condo complex can put you on the ground in a second. Again, ride slow and straight up and don't let the concrete bite you.

Rubber - If you thought you might save some money by buying **long lasting tires**, think again. Such tires are typically not as tacky and have less traction when the rain comes out. Next time you change tires look for the tackiest one that will take care of you better during your northwest riding adventures.

How about that **rubber they use around railroad tracks** to decrease the sound as cars drive over them? Forget those little circles on the surface, these provide zero traction to you as you cross. Slow and straight up.

Steel - Manhole covers are enemy number one and **railroad tracks** rank a close second. Making a turn over the surface of them sets you up for trouble. Avoid such, or keep the bike straight up and cross over it slowly.

Railroad tracks have a way of popping up on you just after a turn and you may still be into a lean when you reach them. Look for the crossing signs ahead of time, slow down and stay straight up when crossing.

Grated bridge crossings and **metal plates** are a nasty encounter in the rain. Look at where you want to ride, take it slow and don't try any fancy dancing, particularly a lane change.

Water - Puddles/Pot Holes - It only takes once to know how this one feels. You cruise through a puddle and after it's too late you realize you just went into a pot hole that wants to suck you into the underworld more painfully than Satan himself beating you down with a stick. Avoid puddles if you can. Use caution and predict the possibility ahead of time. Recovery from this rude awakening is not always easy. Pull over and take a few minutes of rest if you need to gather your wits. In 1997 the Seattle Times reported that the DOT only had enough funds to patch 60% of the potholes created in the state that wet winter.

Oil - It's everywhere and very illusive. Those little red and blue rainbows on the ground mean danger. Ride slow and straight up. As per the DOL's motorcycle safety manual, if you're caught in the first rain following a few dry days remember the roads are covered with lots of oil and dirt that will be lifted from the surface in the first 30-60 minutes of a new rain. Take a coffee break if you can.

Ride Safe,

Patrick Thomas - Winter/01

http://www.soundrider.com/archive/safety-skills/rain_riding.htm

Safety is No Accident!