

MC Safety

Spring Tune-up

Beyond Motorcycle Safety Class: SPRING TUNE-UP

If you mention the words "spring tune-up" to motorcyclists they will probably think you are talking about preparing their motorcycle for the upcoming riding season. While getting your bike ready to ride is certainly very important, every motorcycle owner's or service manual addresses the issue thoroughly under "scheduled maintenance." The kind of spring tune-up I'm talking about is the kind you do to yourself, not the motorcycle.

After a winter of inactivity, we could use a little refresher of our motorcycle riding skills. No matter your experience level, the fact is you are about to engage in an activity you have not done in a long time. Common sense dictates that some level of preparation is in order.

Like professional baseball and football players who practice before they start their seasons, we motorcyclists also need to practice before we get too far into ours. Higher-than-average accident rates involving motorcyclists in the spring seem to indicate that some re-acclimation to motorcycling and the skills required to ride safely is in order.

The most obvious place to begin tuning-up is by enrolling in an Experienced Rider Class. This class is one of the best ways to sharpen your skills and ready yourself for a safe riding season. A recently completed study of accident rates involving experienced and relatively inexperienced riders who graduated from the California Motorcycle Training Program indicates that the effect of motorcycle skills training wanes within two years after graduation. In other words, you should take an Experienced Riders Course every two years to keep your riding skills sharp. You can receive a schedule for these classes in the mail by calling the local MSF trainers (970) 493-3137 or find a training here <http://nm.msf-usa.org/msf/ridercourses.aspx?state=CO>. Thunder Mountain Chapter will also have a signup sheet for the April Training at the April chapter meeting.

Another suggestion for tuning-up is to start slow and easy. Think about all that time you and your motorcycle have spent parked during the winter. Perhaps your first motorcycle ride of the season should be a ride to work, not a ride cross-country. We

all long for a motorcycle excursion, but even long-distance runners begin their training with shorter practice runs.

Brush-up on your low-speed riding skills in a large empty parking lot. Styrofoam cups or tennis balls cut in half make good collapsible markers for setting up things like sharp corners, lane dividers and slalom weaves. Practice riding as slowly as you can using good clutch control and balance. Negotiate left and right sharp corners using good cornering technique (slow, look, lean & roll).

Sharpen your counter steering skills by steering around one of your markers at speed (please do not forget you are in a parking lot!). Set up a weave using 7-10 markers in a straight line six to eight feet apart. Practice the all-important skill of keeping your head and eyes up, looking where you want to go not where you are. Establish a braking chute, where you attempt to stop as quickly as you can, without locking up your brakes. Remember, whatever you learn here in the parking lot is something you won't have to learn the hard way...in traffic!

So, take an Experienced Rider Course. Remember to start off slow and easy. Find some time and a place to brush-up on your motorcycle riding skills. If you spend a fair amount of time practicing these skills you will be rewarded with a feeling of confidence that comes from knowing you have accomplished a good spring tune-up and you're ready to ride.

Article taken from http://www.motorbyte.com/mmm/pages/safety/spring%204_97.htm and was mostly written by: Bill Bassett a 24-year motorcycle riding veteran and a licensed Motorcycle Safety Foundation/MN Motorcycle Safety Center instructor. Mr. Bassett's column is based solely on his own experiences and opinions.

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