

Why Wear Protective Gear (a **MUST** read!)

Probably the most fun part of motorcycling is the freedom of riding in the open air. Unlike riding in a car or truck, surrounded by a cage, on bikes/trikes we feel like we are a part of everything around us. While that is a good feeling, there are some drawbacks... extreme hot or cold weather, rain, bugs or debris (in the road or in the air!). It was for the "drawbacks" that protective gear was developed.



Protective gear has two basic purposes – comfort and protection. Uncomfortable gear can distract us from riding, while proper fitting gear helps us stay comfortable and, as the name suggests, **PROTECTED**. In the event of the worse of all possible scenarios... a crash... this protective gear can save our lives. Below are brief guidelines for the protective gear we should be using.

Helmets

The most important piece of protective gear you can wear is a helmet manufactured to meet DOT standards. In a study performed by the University of Southern California, researchers analyzed 3,600 police reports of on-highway motorcycle crashes. This research established that helmets save lives by reducing the occurrence of head injuries, and wearing a properly fitting helmet does not reduce essential vision or hearing.

Helmets help protect your head in four ways.

1. The **outer shell** resists penetration and abrasions
2. Inside the shell is the equally important **impact-absorbing liner** that absorbs more of the shock by slowly collapsing under impact.
3. The soft **foam and-cloth liner** next to your head helps keep you comfortable and the helmet fitting snugly.
4. The **retention system**, or chinstrap, is the one piece that keeps the helmet on your head in the event of a crash.

Face Shields

Face shields come in a variety of designs to fit most any helmet. Some flip up for convenience and there are non-flip types, such as the flat shield, that snap directly to the helmet. If you select a bubble shield (either a flip-up or a snap-on style) make sure that its compound curves do not distort your vision. When using a face shield, be sure it is securely fastened to the helmet. It should be impact-resistant and free from scratches. Scratches can refract light and blur vision. Tinted shields help avoid eye fatigue during daylight hours, but always wear a clear one at night. Make sure the shield you choose is designed for your helmet and does not interfere with any eyeglasses you may wear.

Protective Eyewear

Riders wearing protective eyewear receive eye protection, but they are not protected from possible injury to other parts of the face. As has been emphasized before, full-face helmets and face shields provide better protection for the entire face.

Footwear

Sturdy, over-the-ankle boots can protect you from a variety of riding hazards. They protect against burns from hot exhaust pipes and impacts from flying road debris. Boots with oil-resistant, rubber-based composite soles will give you a strong grip on the pavement and help you keep your feet on the pegs. If the boots have heels, they should be low and wide. In case of a crash, boots help provide valuable protection against foot and ankle injuries.

Gloves

Full-fingered motorcycle gloves protect hands from blisters, wind, sun and cold and will help prevent cuts, bruises and abrasions in a crash. Gloves that fit properly will improve your grip on the handlebars. If your gloves are too loose or bulky, you may have problems operating the controls of your motorcycle. If they are too tight, circulation will be restricted and your hands will become cold. Seamless gloves or gloves with external seams will help prevent blisters. Gauntlets will keep cold air from going up your sleeves.

Jackets, Pants, Riding Suits

Protective gear will help you stay comfortable while riding in adverse conditions. In a crash, proper riding gear will help prevent or reduce injury. Reports state that covering the body with leather or an abrasion-resistant fabric (e.g., Cordura®, Kevlar® or ballistic nylon) also provides a high level of injury protection. Protective apparel designed specifically for motorcycling will afford the best combination of comfort and protection. These garments are cut longer in the sleeves and legs, and fuller across the shoulders to accommodate your riding posture. Special overlaps and flaps help seal out the wind and padding helps protect you in a crash.

Motorcyclists often wear leather because it is durable and abrasion resistant, giving good protections against injury. Many modern fabrics, such as Cordura® and ballistic nylon, are also abrasion- or wind resistant, waterproof and have high-visibility properties. In addition, the modern fabrics are much, much lighter than leather. Many motorcycle dealers carry a varied line of riding jackets and suits. Your riding habits, budget and local weather conditions will influence your choice of purchase.

Remember -- Shop wisely and make sure your purchase **fits properly** and is specifically **made for motorcycling**.

As always, we welcome and encourage your questions and comments. Please don't ever hesitate to contact us if we can be of help.

Ride safe, have fun and always take the long way home.

Gene and Carolyn Tice

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