

Riding in the Rain (yes, you can do it!)

General Gear for Wet Weather Riding:

1. Dress (or pack) for the conditions, with excellent rain gear, water-proof gloves, and a full-face helmet. If your rain gear is too baggy, consider wearing it under your riding gear. Consider tucking your gloves into your sleeve cuffs so the water running down your sleeve does not drain into your gloves.
2. The interior of a visor on a full-face helmet is likely to fog up. A variety of products are available to reduce the fog, e.g. a pin-lock system, lemon Pledge or a Fog City visor liner. Talk to others about the products they like, as new products are available every few years.
3. Think too about water building up on the visor or other protective eyewear and how you'll remove the water for clear vision. You might use the squeegee on the waterproof glove, using Nikwax Visor spray (or similar product), or turn your head sideways to get the water to blow off while riding. Think about the effect of water interfering with your night vision and you'll want to pick up something to reduce the risks.
4. Consider a rain hood under your helmet to avoid a stream of water down your back. Be aware that garments around your neck or head, if tucked inside the jacket, will wick water onto your clothes (you know, that clothing you're trying to keep dry).
5. Keep the feet dry with waterproof boots or boot covers.
6. If frequently riding in the rain, make sure to treat all your gear with the right products to retain water repellency. Wax the leather boots, gloves and jacket as needed (beeswax, mink oil, silicon, etc.).
7. Consider heated gear, including heated grips. Even though you're dry, the dampness has a chilling effect and you don't want hypothermia.
8. Think about accessory lights on your bike to improve your vision while also making you more visible. Flash the brake light when slowing to make sure folks realize what you're doing (especially around other motorcyclists, as the brake light doesn't illuminate when you simply roll off the throttle to slow).

Motorcycle Maneuvering in Wet Weather:

1. Anticipate upcoming actions so you have time to execute smoothly and without locking up the brakes. Instead of a four-second following distance when the weather is clear, consider an eight-second distance. Make every action deliberate and slow. Think, "low

and slow, and very smooth. Initiate all turns very gradually and slow down prior to the turn or intersection.

2. Beware the road spray of other vehicles, especially 18-wheelers. No better way to pretend you're riding in the shower, so be aware of reduced visibility using your 8-second following distance. Add in a fogged helmet and this quickly becomes a great adventure.
3. Think about manhole covers, painted lane stripes, crosswalks, steel plates, lane markers, railroad tracks, and bridge decks as they can be slippery. If riding at night, they're usually the shiny things in the road. Avoid leaning when crossing such road features and take power away by squeezing the clutch.
4. Remember light rain draws oils to the roadway surface and may be more dangerous than a heavy downpour, which tends to wash off the roadway. Remember too that water builds up in the tire tracks, so you have a lot of things to consider when choosing where to ride.
5. The time to ensure you have adequate tread depth (greater than 3/16th) and proper inflation is before it starts raining, and before you start your ride. Improperly inflated tires dramatically increase the chance of hydroplaning. If you start to hydroplane, do not brake or accelerate hard, and keep the front wheel pointed straight ahead (you don't want to lean).
6. If you need to downshift, be smooth and engage the clutch slower and more deliberate than normal. Be upright (no lean) when the clutch is released so the tire does not regain traction when leaned over in a puddle.
7. Avoid abrupt throttle changes, both up and down.
8. Apply controlled pressure to the brakes so the tires are not loaded or unloaded abruptly. Apply both brakes with caution to avoid lockup or engaging the ABS.

Send me your tips to add to this collection.