

Fog

There were a few things at the December gathering that I wanted to cover, but for some reason I got a little side tracked. It all started when I mentioned the words "space heater".

I think I can thank Ron Walters for getting me side tracked. At least that's how I remember it, but either way we had some great laughs that day.

Now, speaking briefly of space heaters, and I know this isn't motorcycle related, but you, my friends reading this, are motorcyclists, and I want to make sure I say something about it. About 4 days before Christmas, a friend of mine who lives in Oklahoma, lost his mobil home to a fire. He barley escaped himself, and ended up with a few burns. The cause? Space heater! Please, be careful with those things. Make sure you don't have any flammable material nearby that could possibly come in contact with it. That's what happened to Jim.

Okay, moving on. Fog! Well, we got to see some of that lately. You may have woke up on New Years day considering riding your bike to Famous Daves, and when you looked out your window in the morning, you didn't see much. I know I didn't in Miamisburg.

Now, fog doesn't have to be a reason to not ride, but you do need to be aware of a few things when riding in fog.

With limited visibility you are unable to see the horizon, which is what we use to help maintain our balance. Passing trees give you some hint of vertical, but not always reliably. Anyway, if you are in a curve and must stop quickly, you have no way of knowing if the bike is vertical when you get stopped! Before you know it you find the bike falling over and you are unable to stop it. All because you could not see the horizon, (even though you do not consciously look at it in order to gauge vertical.)

Studies have shown that people tend to gradually increase speed while driving in the fog. I didn't know that, and cannot recall that I have had that happen to me, but I certainly understand how it could happen. With any experience at all we tend to look at our speedometers rarely as we can judge pretty well what our speed is using the passing scenery for cues. In the fog those cues are unreliable.

What is fog? Fog is tiny droplets of water in the liquid state that form when moisture laden air is cooled below its dew point. Fog is like clouds in nearly every way except how it's formed. Clouds form when moisture laden air rises and is cooled. Fog forms when moisture laden air cools at or near the ground surface.

Because fog tends to be a local condition, accurate forecasting is rare. Your favorite drive time radio weather forecaster may be cheerfully commenting about "possible patches of fog this morning" just as your Gold Wing plunges into a mile long fog bank.

The most obvious risk to a motorcyclist is a sudden, drastic reduction in visibility. Abruptly, you don't know what (if anything) is stalled on the highway just ahead, or just how soon you'll reach the next curve in the road. If you're riding at night, your headlight beam is suddenly diffused, destroying your night vision with its glare. If you're riding in daytime the sunlight above the fog illuminates it, making you think you're surrounded by bright cotton candy. In either daytime or night, set your headlight to low beam; it will reflect less off the moisture drops.

Your best riding tactic is to roll off your speed rapidly, but not abruptly, by gradual braking. Not only does fog keep you from seeing the perils ahead of you; it also means the 18 wheeler behind you can't see either, and he may not have rolled off his speed!

If you choose to pull off the highway, do so quickly, carefully and completely. Then turn off your lights so that same 18 wheeler high balling into the fog behind you doesn't mistake you to be still underway ahead of him and smack into you! When riding in hilly country where dips and valleys fill with patches of fog while the hills and higher areas are clear, resist the urge to blast through the fog. **WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE, CAN HURT YOU.**