

Spring Readiness

We've all heard the little rhyme, "April showers bring May flowers." The rhyme originated in the northeastern United States and reflects more accurately their weather pattern. Here in the Midwest, ours showers begin in March, along with strong west coast and southern prevailing jet streams pushing back the northern cold fronts. This environmental combination ignites our natural urges to fire up our rides and roar down the road, showing off new bikes or new parts, chrome and paint we've added to our rides over the cold winter months. To help ward off any serious problems, you need to begin preparing yourself and your bike for the upcoming riding season.

For some of us that means refining our skills with an Experienced Rider Course (ERC). If you signed up for the group class coming up in early May, great! If not, find a class, sign up and take it. I take the ERC every year just to start the season out right with a review, and then I practice it. Yes, it's not always enough to just take the course, and spend the 5+ hours on the range. Go find an empty parking lot, and do a little practicing. It doesn't have to be anything too involved or serious, just practice some emergency braking, and swerving. The more you practice this sort of thing, the more it will become second nature to you when you need it in a crisis. That's when we'll really find out if we learned anything. It's one thing to be in a controlled environment like an ERC and do the routine that is shown to you, but it's another thing to have it in your head when you need it. A panic situation. So, get out there and practice, practice, practice.

Okay, it's March, the weather will be getting nicer, and we've de-winterized the bikes, and are ready to hit the road. Let's pay close attention to the road condition. Those early mornings, or evenings may still find some black ice on the roads in those shaded areas. It may be warm during the day, but freezing temperatures at night are still relevant.

There is no doubt we'll be greeted by some rain when we're on the roads, so just keep in mind when you're traveling at higher speeds rising water, and puddles can lead to hydroplaning. We only have 2 (some 3) wheels on the ground, and you don't want to deal with hydroplaning as you will become defenseless almost feeling like your tires just became ice skates on ice. Your best plan of attack in the heavy water areas of the roads is to slow down a bit.