

## Hot Weather Riding Tips

As summer approaches and the rains wane we will be encountering the good ole Texas Heat. This will require a change in riding strategy to keep everyone safe and comfortable.

### Planning the Ride

As the weather heats up try to plan on starting your rides earlier in the day. It will be cooler and allow you to get back before it gets too hot. As you plan your route try to reduce the amount of stop lights, heavy slow traffic areas, and wide open areas where you will be exposed to hot winds. Instead try to plan routes where there are tree lined roads, and chose a route where you will not be caught in heavy traffic. Some local traffic areas to try to avoid are Loop 1604 from Highway 90 to Bandera road, IH 35 around the Forum area, and Loop 410 during rush hours.

When you are riding in a group keep an eye on other riders. Look for signs that they may be dehydrated or are overheating. Refer to the section below for the signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Plan additional stops in locations that have ample shade for the riders to take a break. Avoid having riders stand on the asphalt, the heat will radiate up from the ground and cook your feet and legs. Stopping at a convenience store will provide a place to cool off in air conditioning, and cold water. If necessary on these stops wet a cotton under shirt, hydration vest, or neck rag to reduce your core body temperature.

### Hydration in Hot Weather

Our bodies are constantly losing water as we ride by perspiration and wind loss. As we lose this water it must be replaced to avoid health issues. When the ambient temperature is below 98.6° the body may perspire less than 1 quart of water a day, when the condition cause evaporative cooling to take place this will rapidly increase to more than 1 ½ quarts per hour. If you are taking less than this you will become dehydrated. There are two methods of hydration when riding, preride hydration or catchup hydration.

By far preride hydration is the best and safest choice. Start hydrating the day before the ride and continue the morning of the ride. Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks the night before and on the rides as these will dehydrate you faster. During the ride keep drinking as much as possible as you ride. A well place cup holder will come in handy to keep a water bottle close at hand. Another handy way to have water close at hand is the use of a Camelback water system. Many of these systems use a small pack to carry the water bladder and have a hose with a valve that will allow the rider to drinks as they ride.

With the catchup method you are at a disadvantage. You did not pre-hydrate so as you ride you are immediately depleting the body's water reserves. Remember that if you wait till you are thirsty to start hydrating you are behind the eight ball and will not catchup. In this situation you will need to keep drinking as much as possible. If you stop sweating or begin

having any of the symptoms listed below it is a sign that you are dehydrated and need stop and rehydrate immediately.

### **Dressing for the Heat**

A common misconception is that as long as you are moving along at a fair clip you will stay cooler. This will only work if the air temperature is less than your skin temperature, if it is hotter than your skin temperature your body will pump more blood to your skin to try to keep your core cooler. This will only cause your blood to heat up and pump more heat to your core.

This will happen even quicker if you have a lot of exposed skin. To slow this process down you should wear long sleeves, wind blocking clothing, moisture wicking base layers, and ventilated riding jackets. When using a ventilated jacket you must keep in mind that the larger holes in the mesh jacket work by convection when the temperature is 98.6° or less, When the temperature is greater than 98.6° and evaporative cooling takes affect a wet shirt or hydration vest will work the best. Several motorcycle apparel manufacturers make special hydration vest, inserts, neck wraps, and face covers designed to keep riders cool.

Using windshields and fairings on your motorcycle will also help deflect hot winds away from your body. Helmet manufactures make helmets with many features that help when riding in hot weather such as vents that can be opened and closed to provide ventilation and polystyrene helmet liners that work similar to an ice chest to provide both impact and insulating properties. These features will help keep your head cooler while riding in the heat.

When riding in the summer it is important to wear long pants such as jeans to prevent the dehydrating effects of wind, the risk of sunburn, injury to the legs from road debris, and burns from heat radiating off of hot engines and exhaust. Do not pour water on your jeans to help keep you cool because as the water starts to evaporate it will increase the risk of burns from heat radiating off hot engines and exhaust.

### **What to Carry**

Always bring water with you as you ride in the summer even if you are planning to pick up cold water or drinks at your rest stops. This is cheap insurance! You never know when you may encounter a breakdown situation or an unexpected problem where you will have to stop and be exposed to direct sunlight. I like to carry a small ice chest as I ride. In it I carry frozen water bottles these will melt as you ride and you will have cold water to drink without having to deal with ice. I also carry a small towel or hydration neck wrap in a large zip lock bag with ice that I can use to help cool off. If you have room, carry a gallon water jug that you can use to drench your shirt, add additional water to hydration vest, and head to cool off if you begin to overheat.

A small tarp or blanket with a couple of lengths of parracord can be used to provide shelter from the sun in an emergency or breakdown situation when there is no shade. The tarp can be strung from a fence line or tied to the motorcycle to shelter you from direct sunlight. Remember that many times you have no control of where you will encounter trouble and a little preparation goes a long ways.

Protect your skin from sunburn and reduce the chances of getting skin cancer by using a sunblock with a minimum of 30 SPF and Chap Stick and reapply it regularly. This is something I must constantly remind myself of. Remember that you can still get sunburned when there is cloud cover.

## **Heat Related Illnesses**

Heat related illnesses are health crises caused by exposure to hot weather and the sun. Heat emergencies have three stages: Heat Cramps, Heat Exhaustion, and Heatstroke. All three stages are serious. If left untreated, the first two can lead to heatstroke, the most serious of all.

### **Heat Cramps**

Heat cramps are the first stage of a heat emergency. They usually happen in riders who have been physically active in the heat, but can occur in people who have not been active. Heat cramps are especially likely in older riders, overweight riders, and those who have been drinking alcohol. The cramps usually start in the legs and lower abdomen and progress to the arms and hands. The signs of heat cramps are muscle pains and tightness.

To treat heat cramps stop riding and move to a shaded or air conditioned area, drink water and massage the cramping muscles. If you are still in pain drink a half a glass of water with ½ teaspoon of table salt every 15 minutes. Do not proceed till you do not have cramps and have drank plenty of water. Remember that this a first sign of Heat Exhaustion and should be taken seriously.

### **Heat Exhaustion**

With heat exhaustion the danger level has increased dramatically and immediate action must be taken.

There are two types of Heat Exhaustion:

- Water Depletion – Signs include excessive thirst, weakness, headache, and loss of consciousness.
- Salt Depletion – Signs include nausea and vomiting, muscle cramps, and dizziness.

Other signs and symptoms of early heat exhaustion include irritability, extreme thirst, pale skin, and heavy sweating. Later stages of heat exhaustion can include convulsions and fainting.

**Call 911 immediately.** Follow these steps until help arrives:

- Treat for shock, lay the person down in the shade with their feet elevated.
- Loosen the victims clothing and begin drenching them with water to lower their body temperature.
- Wet a towel or Tee shirt and use it to cool the head and neck.
- Give sips of water as tolerated.
- Observe other riders to ensure that they are ok.

If after 15 minutes the symptoms do not significantly improve, seek immediate medical assistance because heat exhaustion can progress to heatstroke quickly.

### **Heatstroke**

In heatstroke, all the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion may be present, plus the following.

- Body temperature over 105 F
- Irrational behavior
- Confusion
- Rapid shallow breathing
- Rapid weak pulse
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- Sweating may or may not be present in heatstroke
- Vomiting or Diarrhea

A person who is experiencing heatstroke might have skin that feels very dry from dehydration. This is the most dangerous stage and if not treated quickly can cause death.

**Call 911 immediately.** The goal is to get the victim to the nearest hospital as quickly as possible, do not wait for an ambulance. Get a vehicle to provide transportation and keep in contact with the 911 operator.

- Get the victim into the air conditioning or shade.
- Remove outer riding gear.
- Fan the victim with a towel or electric fan.
- Get the body temperature down below 102° as quickly as possible.
- Drench the victim with water and if possible apply ice packs to the armpits, neck, groin, and back.
- If a possible move to a shower or bath tub with ice water, swimming pool or other water body is available carefully float the victim.
- Do not give the victim any drinks when victim is in an altered consciousness.
- Even if the victim begins to recover they must still go as quickly to the hospital.