

Why I Ride... Weather Edition

We are fortunate enough to live in an area of the country that allows us to ride mostly year-round. Autumn is by far my favorite season for riding. It's cool outside, the air smells crisp and fresh, and here in Albuquerque, the mountains change colors throughout the day with the foliage colors and sun reflections. Just beautiful!

We have had some cold days/weeks here lately and I must be honest, I have had a bit of PMS (Parked Motorcycle Syndrome). Last week, I decided to go get some groceries on the Adventure (ADV) bike. As soon as I started moving, it felt like any stresses or anxiety in my life were gone. I feel free when I ride, as many of you can surely attest.

To extend my riding season, I make sure to have good quality gear throughout the riding year. When cold out, it is vital to know how to use layers and insulated gear. Earlier this week, we had a winter storm that affected most of the country as well. Fortunately, we only saw a drop in temperature, so I got to ride. As I was headed to the office around 0600, it was 28 degrees outside. As many of you will know, windchill at highway speeds amplifies the cold significantly. As I also enjoy moto-camping adventures, learning to be in the cold, comfortably, is essential. One thing I learned growing up in up-state New York, was that keeping your chest (core) warm is the key to overall warmth. When you keep your core warm, you stay warm.

One area I discovered that was not as covered as it should have been, was my neck and helmet. I can tell you that ANY exposed skin points can become frostbit if directly exposed to freezing temps. I had not fully sealed all the vents in my helmet and my neck warmer was not tucked into my jacket and helmet properly. This left me with a few VERY cold shots of winter air (would not recommend). Lesson learned: take your time to make sure you are 100% ready for the temperatures you will be exposed to on your ride. Here in Albuquerque, that 28-degree morning ended up being a 60-degree afternoon (desert environments often have a 20-40-degree swing each day throughout the year). I was layered up in the morning and in summer gear with vents open by the afternoon. Having different types and levels of gear is key here.

Overall, I love to ride as much as I can and that occasionally includes extreme temperatures (hot and cold). Using effective risk management to prepare for my rides is the key to enjoying the rides. Many of us have been there; caught in the rain, wind or cold without the right gear...NOT fun. Choosing when NOT to ride, is also an important option to consider. There is nothing wrong with pulling off the road to wait out a storm or even skipping a ride if you know there will be weather. Some days just aren't worth the extra risks. Weather can really change your attitude out there. Stay safe; stay prepared; and ride your own ride...

Why do you ride?

- Dave Brandt, DAF Motorcycle Safety Program Manager