

# ***Night Riding***

## **Prep**

A simple way to arm yourself against the evening is to prep your ride. That means giving everything a thorough scrub before you hit the street. Headlights, taillights, signal lights, windshields and helmet visors should be cleaned at least twice a week.

If you ride with a full-face helmet, make sure the shield is scratch- and fog-free. A scored visor can create light refraction and make two headlights seem like four; you won't know what's coming from where. Keeping fog at bay is a breeze with our favorite home remedy: Remove your helmet's visor and spit over the inside of it. Wipe your drool off with a clean rag, and bam!-antifog coating. (Shaving cream has a similar effect.) There are a variety of inexpensive solutions available that do the trick. Any antifog are more effective than sliding your fingers behind the shield to wipe it on the road.

## **Blinded by the Light**

Remember that glare is in the eye of the beholder. Middle-aged and older riders are more sensitive than younger people, so if you're running high-output auxiliary lights, give the other guy a break. The brighter beams can easily blind the very people you're trying to get to notice you. A teacher at the AARP Driver Safety Program course (participants age 55-plus) tells us he often hears complaints about motorcycle headlights being too bright. With the average driver's age on the rise, it's food for thought.

HID lights are also showing up on more bikes and cars in the U.S. Mounted on your machine you'll love their broader, brighter light. If you're on the other side of those bluish beams, though, you'll curse the blinding rays. As a common courtesy keep your lights on low when you're behind the other guy. And if a driver zaps you from the opposite direction, training your eye on the right edge of the road can help as a steering guide.

## **Dial 'er Down**

Because night riding reduces both the distance and quality of what you see, you might want to keep a lighter touch on the throttle-especially if you're in the boonies. It'll be tougher to determine surface condition as well as the road's general direction at night, key points on unlit country lanes. Be prepared to stop if you're confused-don't guess. If you can, use the lights of other nearby vehicles as well as your own to keep an eye on the road and give yourself room to react.

In turns, make sure you have plenty of lean angle in reserve. If the turn tightens or the pavement changes, you may need the extra runoff.

## **Pick A Spot**

Don't settle in behind a large truck or any vehicle's blind spot-get your motorcycle where it can be seen. The center of the lane is probably your best bet (you'll

blend into street lighting if you ride too far on the road's edge). Give yourself plenty of room when passing other vehicles so you can adjust if they decide to shimmy over.

### **Rest up**

It's not a good idea to ride when you're tired. Long hauls in the evening can easily leave you in autopilot mode. You may not react to hazards as quickly as you would during the day. Changing up your speed and taking regular breaks is the best way to fight fatigue on long nighttime journeys. Snack and stretch-the movement and light food will help ward off tiredness.

### **Over Here**

It's also in your best interest to make yourself a little larger than life. Wearing bright clothing and reflective material makes you pop at night. The biggest thing a following driver sees is your back, so get some reflectivity back there.

Streetglo.net stocks DOT-approved, motorcycle-specific stick-on tape for less than \$10 a roll. Make sure you use your turn signals so people around you know what you're about to do.

### **Let There Be Light**

As you might expect, your bike's lighting is your biggest weapon. Even simple things like ensuring your headlight and taillights have good-quality bulbs and clean lenses will yield big gains. If light quality is subpar, consider adding dual running lights; three properly aimed headlights are much more noticeable than one. Current styling trends have also led many manufacturers to use undersized brake lighting. If your rear light is a dot, think about swapping in a larger model. Halogen lamps-up to 30 percent brighter than stockers-can be had for less than \$15.

### **Ready, Aim**

In their dogged quest for style many manufacturers aim the headlight lower than the legal angle. Consult your owner's manual, then peek into the headlight area to find the adjustment hardware and tweak away.

### **Eye, Aye**

Last (but perhaps most importantly), get your eyes checked. One quick visit can diagnose any problems. Dr. Risko says, "People with astigmatism are more likely to be disturbed by glare or light sensitivity. But almost all astigmatism can be corrected. Contacts are better for riding as they don't compromise peripheral vision like glasses do."

All things considered, it probably isn't as bad as it seems. After all, 50 is the new 25, right? Just tell that to my wife-she's ordered me a walking cane and already agreed that it's time for bifocals and a new Harley Trike.