

Motorcycle Winterizing Tips

On the internet at: http://www.gmasw.com/bikewin_.htm

When the (Michigan) riding season ends, these tips may be helpful.

Oil Change and Lube: Change the motor oil prior to Winter storage. I change mine, and then run it for a few minutes to circulate new oil around the engine. (There will be differing opinions on this.) Regardless, change the oil before storing! Also, lube moving parts (cables, etc.) with recommended lubricants. Note: An exception to this is AMS Oil and possibly other synthetic lubricants (Update: Nov 2007).

Run Carb(s) out of Gasoline: Purge the carb(s) before storage anytime and add gasoline stabilizer to your tank per the instructions.

Wash Motorcycle (thoroughly): As stated in my "Motorcycle Cleaning Tips" a motorcycle needs a thorough washing before storage. I use a leaf blower to dry it, and then towel off excess water.

Windshield: Remove bugs off as soon as possible... some insects contain chemicals that will etch paint, and ruin windshields... aside from the fact that bug parts are more difficult to remove when dry. Use an approved cleaner for your motorcycle windshield.

Painted Areas and Frame: Apply a coat of wax on painted areas to keep condensation from collecting and damaging your bike. Note: The motorcycle frame often gets neglected, but it should be waxed prior to winter storage like other painted parts.

Chrome and Rims: Clean the chrome and aluminum parts, then coat them with a good chrome polish (e.g., Harley Davidson, Mother's, or Clean Cycle Metal Polish) will clean/polish these areas. It will be easier in Spring to shine. However, if you are hard pressed to do a thorough job on these areas and want to keep the tarnish off (especially aluminum), a coat of silicone lube will give some protection (washed off in Spring). My off-road bikes always got a silicone treatment before Winter storage (even though I occasionally rode a bike in the snow).

Chain and Drive Belts: Adjust the chain or belt per spec. If you have a chain drive, lube the chain with a chain lube (SAE 90 works) or lightweight grease (leave a note to clean excess in Spring).

Leather: There are several leather cleaners and conditioners. Leather riding gear should get a thorough cleaning, and then coated with leather conditioner before storage. Note: Several light coats are better than a heavy one. If your leather gets wet, a light coat of Lexol (brand name) conditions the leather. Buff leather with a soft cloth after the cleaner/conditioner is dry.

Vinyl: Clean vinyl with a vinyl cleaner, and then use a protector. There are several products on the market. Buff with a soft cloth when dry.

Battery: Tending the battery is advisable. Remove the battery. Clean the terminals. Check the fluid level (add if necessary)... use a flashlight to shine through the battery to see the level. Then attach a Battery Tender (a brand name as well) to keep the battery charged. Place the battery on a wood plank (not concrete). Put a tender on your wish list if you do not own one (Harley-Davidson makes a good one.)

Exhaust Pipes: Little critters and bugs do not know any better...so stuff a clean soft cloth in the end of your pipe, and/or cover the end with a plastic bag (secured with a rubber band). Leave note to remove the bags and rags in Spring. (Note: A little fuel oil on the rag will discourage most critters from making a home in a pipe. (Dampen, not soak, the cloth with fuel oil then stuff in the pipe(s).)

Tire Pressure: Check the tire pressure, and leave note to check in Spring.

Cover: Protect your motorcycle with a breathable cover, or use a soft cotton bed sheet to keep dust off. Neither will prevent condensation from forming. Note: Cats like to perch on warm places during the cool months. I put a box over my seat and backrest to restrict that activity.

Clean Helmet: Wearing a helmet is a matter of choice (in my humble opinion). In Michigan, it is still mandatory (law) as of November 2007. There are products advertised to "freshen" your helmet that work well. But, a simpler and cheaper method is to use a little Ivory dish soap, or Dr. Bonner's Peppermint Oil Soap with warm water to clean and refresh your helmet. Note: A damp cloth rubbed around the inside does wonders every week or so. Allow the helmet to dry before using.

Remove any temperature sensitive gauges, e.g., Oil Temp Dip Stick. Extreme temps may damage this equipment. Stuff clean (lint free) cloth in "holes" and leave note for Spring.

Spring Note/List: Write down all the things you need to do or check in the Spring. Then, tape the list to the ignition or handle bars where you will see it before you use the motorcycle.

If you cannot do these things, take your motorcycle to a reputable dealer. Hopefully, they will get everything ready for Winter storage.

God bless and... ride safe!