

Speed Bumps – by Tim Taylor

This is the first installment of a monthly news brief to help you become a safer motorcyclist.

Though the bikes are parked for the season, motorcycle safety should still be on our minds. The first thing to do is to perform a T-CLOCS inspection to determine what maintenance should be done or what repairs are necessary to have done over the winter months to prepare the bike for another safe riding season:

T (Tires) – check for wear, cracks, punctures, etc. Remember that the first ride of the season is often a vacation that can add many miles to the tires and it is easier to replace them before than during the trip. Inspect the rims for damage from riding over bumps and potholes.

C (Controls) – ensure that the clutch and brake levers function smoothly, throttle cables adjusted properly, and that all hoses are tight and not cracked.

L (Lights) – check and clean the battery terminals, and put the battery on a tender for the winter to maintain the charge (have it tested if older than 2 years). Ensure all lights (including those added for visibility) are fully functional and are aimed properly.

O (Oil) – change the oil and filter (even if not at a scheduled interval). Check all fluid levels and inspect for any fluid leaks.

C (Chassis) – inspect steering head bearings, forks and shocks, and any moving components.

S (Sidestand) – ensure that the spring pulls the stand up and keeps it there and check the engine stop switch function of the stand (if so equipped).

In addition, the windshield should be inspected for damage from the sun, stones, and improper cleaning methods.

Now that the bike is taken care of, how about the riding gear? If your helmet has fallen or been dropped, it is a good idea to have it professionally inspected or it should be replaced. Face shields should also be replaced if they are scratched or damaged.

Riding jackets, pants, and gloves should be checked for rips, scuffs, and sun fading that can weaken the material. Boot soles should be replaced if excess wear is noted as these can prevent you from getting traction when supporting the bike at stops. Check rain gear for tears, leaks, and for mold that make it ineffective at keeping you dry.

First aid kit materials can become damaged from heat, so replace any items that susceptible to this (Band-Aids, rubber gloves, antibiotics, and medications, to name a few). This also applies to any sunscreen or bug repellent that you carry.

If you take care of these things over the winter months, when riding season comes, you can just check the tire pressure and ride.