



Keeping The Basics In Mind

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MANY OF US ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE ACRONYM USED FOR the preride inspection of our bikes: T-CLOCS. It's a popular staple to toss into periodicals to fill space during the early part of the oncoming riding season. Granted the

idea is a good one, but I have noticed that some riders will forget to continue the process year-round, and that's certainly not a good idea. Becoming complacent over what some consider the simple things can definitely increase the risk of turning a good day of riding into a bad memory, perhaps quickly.

T-CLOCS is our first step in doing what we can to make sure that we are ready to ride. Add that we should always make sure that we are physically and mentally ready (for instance, no ailments that could cause problems, that we're not pissed off at something, hungover — you get the picture). Also, we should always make sure our gear is ready for the ride planned, but checking on your bike should be considered the first important step. So we'll consider this month's article as a reminder of the importance of that pre-ride inspection and take a moment to review what we need to check.

Tires: Bearing in mind that these two pieces of equipment are what help develop traction for moving, turning, and stopping, I'd say they are important to check. Besides looking for a worn tread, cracks in the sidewalls, and foreign objects (nails, screws, etc.), you need to check the air pressure on a regular basis. Though tires do a great job of keeping the air inside, they are not 100 percent airtight. Temperatures and other elements can cause a reduction in the required pressure for your tires.

The number one reason for tire failure is low tire pressure. Check what the tire manufacturer requires for air pressure for your bike, then check your pressures. While you're there, take a look at the spokes and rims and see if the bearings are secure.

Controls: Make sure all your cables, hoses, and switches work. Look for cracks, frayed ends, etc. Check your levers and throttle for smooth operation.

Lights: This may seem like a no-brainer, but something as simple as a directional light not working could cause a conflict if trying to communicate your intentions. Each light has a purpose for being on your motorcycle. Make sure they all work correctly.

Oil and other fluids: I'm no motorhead, but I do understand that motorcycle engines run far better with oil in them. Make sure the level is where it needs to be. Also, check out the levels of other fluids (brakes, tranny), and if you're running H₂O to keep things cool (V-Rod), check your coolant level. The days of hogs leaving their marks where they stood have thankfully been gone for a few decades, so if you notice an oil leak or other fluids on your garage floor, you'd better check it out.

Chassis: You want to be sure your shocks are set for the proper load that will be on the bike along with making sure they work. If you drop your butt on the seat and the rear end or front bounces up and down like a pogo stick, you surely

have an issue that needs addressing. Improperly working or set suspension can affect your bike's handling, which, in turn, can cause a problem for you. Since a lot of us like to keep our rides sparkling, look things over while washing or detailing the bike. If you notice paint missing on frame, that may be a spot where rust could develop and cause fatigue over time.

Sidestand: We're in a politically correct world, so the days of saying kickstand are out — it's just too violent a term. Just kidding. All owner's manuals refer to them as sidestands. You want to make sure the tension spring is up to par. It needs to stay up when it is placed there. Listen, you can make right hand turns all day with the stand down, but that first left turn could be an eye-opener. You also want to make sure that when it's down, it does its job. There's nothing worse than hearing a crash as you're walking away from the parking lot.

Now, all these tasks put together should take about eight to 10 minutes, especially if you get into a routine. The time it takes to check things before heading out could prevent hours of sitting on the side of the road broken down or worse. The process of T-CLOCS is simple, but some may find it just as simple to forget. Hence, the rider that showed up for a MSF course in June with around 22 psi in both his tires stated he couldn't understand why they were low; he checked them out in the beginning of the season (that was about 10 weeks earlier).

When it comes to safety, we are our own first line of defense. Making sure your bike is ready every time you head out is a good step to reduce risk. So remember your T-CLOCS and be safe out there. **AIM**