

**CROSSROADS HOG  
SAFETY THOUGHT  
SEPTEMBER 2010 & 2011**

***RIDING THROUGH THE FALL***

**NO – I don't mean to talk about falling down!** I do mean to talk about a few things that will help you prevent doing that during the Autumn Season here in Michigan.

As you know, we have four seasons for motorcycling in Michigan – Winter (white, cold and slippery), Spring (wet and slippery), Summer (hot and humid), and Fall (colorful and cool). All have their peculiarities for riders. Here are some for you to keep in mind in the Fall.

- Leaves and grass clippings on the road surface not only reduce traction on their own but also can hide frosty, slippery moisture underneath. Avoid them.
- Wildlife on the roads. These critters govern their activity by the daylight schedule. For us that means we are more likely to see them while riding early in the evening and later in the morning. Be alert – ride closer to the center of the road – slow down.
- Frosty Road surfaces can surprise you. Watch for darker spots especially in the morning as “black ice” can be there even on a sunny, bright day.
- Tires – yours – check the air pressure as the cooler weather will result in lower pressure. Bring them up to spec. Also remember that a cooler tire has less tractive capability. Slow down a bit on the corners and curves. Brake more cautiously.
- Other drivers are a major concern all the time but in the colorful Autumn of Michigan they are even more so. They are distracted by the scenery. They don't expect to have motorcyclists out in the cooler weather.
- You are distracted too. Be aware and try to keep your primary focus on riding.
- AND remember that the Sun is at a lower angle at the times we are likely to be on the road. If it is behind you, those other drivers are blinded as they come toward you. If it is in front of you, you are blinded and cannot see the details you need to operate safely. Slow down. Wear proper sunglasses (and take them off when it gets dark!).
- Prepare for widely varying temperatures during a riding day. Dress in layers that can be removed or added as necessary to keep comfortable. You cannot control the bike well, nor can you focus appropriately if you are cold and shivering.
- Your bike and equipment needs change a bit in the Fall as well. If you are out for an over-night ride, take a towel to wipe the seat and windshield in the morning. And, if you are prone to leaving your helmet and gloves with the bike, you might want to reconsider and take them into the hotel. Otherwise you'll be dealing with wet equipment in the morning.

That's my short list. I'm sure you can add some more. Keep them all in mind and enjoy your Fall riding.

Mike “the safety guy” Hoffman