

Tommy's Tech

Winter Maintenance Article

It's getting to be that time of year, the weather is getting colder and wetter. The days are getting shorter and sooner or later it is going to snow. This month we will cover some tips on getting your bike ready for winter storage. I know there are some of you who will ride throughout the winter as long as the roads are clear but keep reading, there are some tips for you too. If you plan on letting your bike sit more than 2 weeks without riding it I would suggest a storage plan as follows.

1. Fill the fuel tank. Keeping the fuel tank full will help to eliminate condensation build up. Condensation can cause rust and contaminate the fuel. The Stabil will ensure the fuel is in good condition when you take the bike out of storage. An alternative to Stabil is a fuel catalyst. Fitch fuel catalyst has a permanent solution to fuel treatment, just drop them in and they do their thing. You don't have to add anything and they will usually last the life of your bike. Fitch claims they make the bike run better if you happen to get bad gas and even boost horsepower. I have been using the Fitch fuel catalysts in all of my bikes, and in my shop gas can since 1998 and had excellent results. They are available through Drag specialties and retail for around \$50.00.

2. Change the oil or oils. Moisture and impurities in your oil can cause problems like corrosion over the storage period if left in the bike. Changing the motor oil and filter will ensure fresh oil inside of your mill. The transmission and primary also should be changed, we see moisture build up in transmissions on a regular basis and the primary oil always seems to be needing a change. On the plus side, your bike will be ready to go when you want it, with no last minute service in the spring.

3. Look over the bike for loose parts, wear or damage. Give parts of the bike a good shake, check over bolts, lube the cables and chain, make adjustments and check tensions. Look at the tire tread and sidewalls for cracks and wear. Adjust tire pressure. Check the electrical, lighting and brake lights to verify it is all in good working order. Repair or replace any bad items you may have found. Don't forget to refer to your Motorcycle Owners Manual or MOM for details, seems like MOM always knows best.

4. Wash the bike, dirt holds moisture, dead bug guts can have chemicals in them that can etch or ruin paint. Thoroughly dry the bike, some guys like to use leaf blowers. There are some products out there specifically made to dry your bike but are costly. I used to give my leaf blower buddies alot of guff about using the yuppie leaf blower, then we got one and they are nice. Its funny, now those same buddies have the high dollar cycle dryers. Yeah, they look cool in the garage but the leaf blower works as good at one third the price. Plus you can keep the wife happy- she thinks you are outside doing yard work! Now that your bike is all cleaned up, remember to treat it to a coat of wax or protectant. A good coat of your favorite wax will really shine your bike up. When it comes to corrosion protection for your polished aluminum, chrome, especially chrome wheels, and these allen bolt heads that always seem to rust, we like to use a product called S100 PROTECTANT. Just spray it on your chrome or polished aluminum and lightly rub it to a clear finish and your done. If you need real heavy duty protection a couple of coats (don't rub them in) will give it protection against road salt that will usually last all winter for those of you who ride all year.

5. Remove the battery or use a battery tender to maintain the battery. Some prefer to remove the battery but we have had excellent results using a battery maintenance system such as the Deltran battery tender. With this system you will have a small quick disconnect wire to the battery in the bike. It has an end that hooks via the quick disconnect to the charger. The charger has smart technology and will keep your battery at the optimum charge without over charging. The battery tender costs from \$32.00 and comes with an extra end for use on other items such as a lawn tractor. A plus with the battery tender is that your bike will be ready to ride as quick as you can unplug the connector! That beats having to install your battery to ride your bike on that nice day.

6. Find a suitable place to store the bike. A clean, dry place is ideal. Getting the tires off of the ground is a good idea too. Motorcycle lifts these days are available at many places, from sears, harbor freight and even Sam's club. They are the run of the mill, made in China stuff. If you want a really solid, made in America bike lift that is made locally here in Wisconsin, by real bikers check out J&S jacks at jsjacks.com these guys are the real deal. If you are parking your daily driver car close by, remember that salt falls off your car in that garage, dries on the floor and is stirred up with every start of the car and opening of the garage door. Salt causes corrosion, so if this is the only place you can store your bike, cover it well. Cycle vault has a cover that has full coverage for your bike. The floor goes down first, then you roll the bike on it. The cover goes over the bike and zips all around it. We have sold many of these covers at our shop and though they are expensive they work very well. A breathable cover will work well in most situations. We like to cover the exhaust pipes with something like a bag held on with a rubber band or use a rubber glove to keep out the critters. If you have a critter problem you might want to clean the garage first. The leaf blower might help here also.

7. If your bike has coolant or a radiator check with your owners manual for maintenance suggestions. Remember that coolant can break down and can cause corrosion and even freeze if not properly maintained.

8. Many shops offer winter storage with discounts given when work is done on your bike in the off season, and some offer heated storage for \$50 to \$60 per month.

The very least you should do even if you ride all year is fill the gas tank up and treat the fuel, change your oils, use the battery tender and the bike will be ready at a moments notice. Don't forget to re add the fuel stabilizer as you re-fuel through the winter months or use the fitch fuel catalyst for a one time permanent treatment.

That wraps the segment on winter storage. If you are not able or don't want to perform these things yourself I am sure your local shop will be very happy to see you. By the way the recommended items can be found at our shop, Tommys Custom Cycle.

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