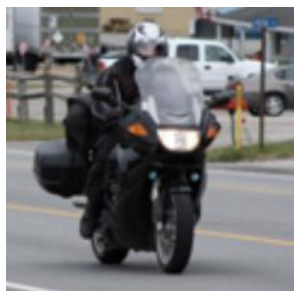


# Factors Affecting Rider Performance

This Section Covers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cold Weather</li><li>• Extreme Hot Weather</li><li>• Night Riding</li><li>• Distracted Riding</li><li>• Fatigue</li></ul>

Riding a motorcycle requires a great amount of



mental alertness and physical skill. Sometimes changes in your environment occur, which can affect your visibility. Physical changes may occur as well, which may affect

your riding performance. Responsible riders know how to adjust or compensate for factors which affect rider performance.

## Cold Weather

In cold weather riding, protect yourself by wearing proper protective gear like a windproof jacket and insulated layers of clothing. It is wise to dress in layers so the layers can be removed as desired. Topping the protective gear with a windproof outer layer can prevent cold air from reaching the skin.

Cold weather significantly lengthens your reaction time. To compensate for the slower reaction time, reduce your speed and increase your following distance and space to the sides.

## Hypothermia

Riding for long periods in cold weather may lower your body temperature and cause hypothermia.

Symptoms of hypothermia may include:

- Deterioration in physical coordination
- Irrational, confused behavior
- Sluggish movement
- Shivering
- Muscle tension
- Shallow, slow breathing

If chill is experienced, leave the roadway at your first opportunity and find shelter. Drink warm liquids, do some exercise to warm yourself and, if your clothes are wet, change out of them.

## Extreme Hot Weather

In extreme hot weather, wear protective gear that breathes. It is still important to wear a jacket and pants to protect you in a collision and to prevent dehydration. Drink plenty of water, stop and remove unnecessary, heavy clothing and dry your hands, if they become slippery due to perspiration.

## Night Riding

Riding at night presents additional risks because a rider's ability to see and be seen by others is limited. You should adjust your riding behavior to compensate for limited visibility by:

- **Reducing Your Speed** – Ride even slower than you would during the day, particularly on roads you don't know well. This will increase your chances of avoiding a hazard.
- **Increasing Distance** – Distances are harder to judge at night than during the day. Open up a four second following distance or more. And allow more distance to pass and be passed.
- **Using the Car Ahead** – The headlights of the car ahead can give you a better view of the road than even your high beam can. Taillights bouncing up and down can alert you to bumps or rough pavement.
- **Using Your High Beam** – Get all the light you can. Use your high beam whenever you are not following or meeting a car.
- **Be Visible** – Wear reflective materials when riding at night.

- **Being Flexible About Lane Position** – Change to whatever portion of the lane is best able to help you see, be seen and keep an adequate space cushion.

## Distracted Riding

A distraction is anything that takes your attention away from riding. Rider distractions may occur anytime and anywhere. Distracted riding can cause collisions, resulting in injury, death or property damage. Taking your eyes off the road or hands off the motorcycle presents obvious riding risks. Mental activities that take your mind away from riding are just as dangerous. You must maintain your attention to the riding task. You are completely and solely responsible for operating your motorcycle in a safe manner.

## Fatigue

Fatigue can affect your control of the motorcycle. To minimize the potential for fatigue:

- **Get a good night's rest** – A good night's rest is important for preventing fatigue.
- **Protect yourself from the elements** – Wind, cold and rain make you tire quickly. Dress warmly. A windshield is worth its cost if you plan to ride long distances.
- **Vary speed and position on seat regularly** – The stimulation resulting from slight changes in speed or in body position will help to overcome the effects of fatigue.
- **Take frequent rest breaks** – Stop and get off the motorcycle every two hours or as needed.
- **Don't use artificial stimulants** – Artificial stimulants often result in extreme fatigue or depression when they start to wear off. Riders are unable to concentrate on the task at hand.

### Test Your Knowledge

#### 1. When riding at night:

- A. Use the left portion of the lane to see around other vehicles ahead.
- B. Ride close to the vehicle in front of you to see better with their headlights.
- C. Reduce your speed to increase your chance of avoiding a hazard.

#### 2. To minimize the potential for fatigue:

- A. Turn on the radio.
- B. Take frequent rest breaks.
- C. Drink caffeine.

1. C – page 59, *Night Riding*

2. B – page 60, *Fatigue*