

Winterizing Your Motorcycle:

With winter right around the corner, it may be time to start thinking about storing your Harley for the season. When your bike sits for a long time in the cold weather, it's important to take steps to avoid corrosion so your bike will be in great shape next spring. The three key areas that you will want to protect over the winter are the valve seats, piston rings, and cylinder walls. Moisture can creep into all of these areas and seriously damage your motorcycle. The key to protecting these areas, is to make them as moisture-proof as possible.

Since some moisture may already have seeped into these areas, you will want to warm up the engine. This will ensure that each cylinder is coated with oil. The second step is to turn the bike off and take out the spark plugs. Now, using an eyedropper, or turkey baster, take a small amount of engine oil and squirt it into each plughole. Then turn the engine over manually. This is best accomplished by putting it into top gear and turning the rear wheel. Make sure you do this before reinserting the spark plugs so that you coat the piston rings, cylinder walls and valve seats. Now replace the spark plugs and drain the crankcase. Refill the crankcase with fresh oil, and your bike is ready for hibernation. Taking these few simple steps will ensure that even a small amount of moisture will not get in and rust the piston rings to the cylinder wall.

The second step in the winterizing process is to prevent rust from occurring inside the fuel tank. The best way to do this is to completely fill the tank with fuel that has been treated with a fuel stabilizer. You can pick up a fuel stabilizer at any boating supply store.

Drain the float bowls by undoing the screw on the carburetor float bowl. This will ensure that no gasoline is left in the bowls, which, over the course of a long winter, can gunk up the carburetor. This could result in a costly carburetor overhaul when it comes time to clean it out. This step is not necessary on fuel-injected bikes.

You will also want to keep the battery charged over the winter. This is best accomplished by connecting it to a Smart Charger. This will maintain the charge during the entire winter season and once connected, can be left alone and forgotten until you pull the bike out in the spring. This is also a good time to check and top off the electrolytes with water, if you do not have a maintenance free battery.

If possible, store the entire bike off the ground, making sure you elevate the rear of the bike. It is also time to do a quick polish and cleaning to make sure that no residue adheres over the course of the winter. A coat of polish will keep the chrome from pitting. Also, put a small amount of rubber protector on the rubber parts on your tank. This will keep them from drying out in the cold. It is also a good idea to check the coolant to make sure you have enough antifreeze to get you through the winter. This will prevent the system from freezing if temperatures plummet dramatically.

Warm It Up Before You Ride Off:

Warming up before you exercise makes it easier and less stressful on your body. Warming up your bike before you take off does the same for the machine. Here's why.

Except for the V-Rod, Harley's engines are air-cooled. Air-cooled engines operate over a wider temperature range than liquid-cooled power plants. That means things inside an air-cooled engine will expand as they warm up and contract when they cool down. Because the metals in the engine are dissimilar, they have different expansion and contraction characteristics. That's why it's so important to use a high-quality multi-viscosity lubricant. It's more important, in fact, than the quality of oil you use in your water-cooled automobile.

Putting stress on a warmed-up engine seldom causes problems unless, of course, you overdo it. However, stressing a cold engine can and often does create problems. No, the stresses don't cause immediate problems, but they can over time.

So why aren't all Harley engines liquid-cooled? Two simple words: complexity and weight; a lot of complexity and a lot of weight. Create a liquid-cooled engine and you'll need a radiator, water jacket, water pump and expansion tank, to name just a few major components.

We're confident that the problems of weight and complexity will be overcome in time. However, for now we would strongly urge you to let your bike idle for just a few minutes before you twist the grip and let out the clutch, even if you have a liquid-cooled bike.