

Time To Wake The Sleeping Machines?

By Shawn Anderson, Certified Harley-Davidson Technician



Get on your bikes and ride!!!

Simmer down now, not so quick.... It is very easy to get stoked up about your first ride of the season, slap on the new sticker and "take her out". There are a few things we all need to do before our first ride to ensure it's a good, safe first ride.

The first thing you are going to want to do is top up your air pressures and rear air suspension to the recommended setting. If you over inflate, like I do

for the winter months, you will be taking some out. Check all your lights, bells and whistles and make sure they are doing all they should.

Before you roll her outside and flash it up make sure to check your oil. If you had no puddles under your bike you should be fine. Now there is a tricky thing about bikes that have been sitting for a while. With bikes like Softails, Sportsters, Shovel Heads and other bikes with the oil tank higher than the motor, you might get faked out and think you lost most or all of your oil because you read very low, or there is nothing on your dipstick, but you have no puddle... hmmm?? What happens with bikes that have the oil tank above the oil pump is, over a period of time this thing we call gravity takes over and allows your oil to bleed through the check ball in your pump and flows slowly into your motor... drip by drip, day by day. So if you think this has happened to you...don't panic and don't just put more oil in. Look inside your bucket and make sure you see a little puddle of oil in there... if not, pour in no more than 1 cup. Flash up your bike and you will see your oil level rise. Your oil pump return gears will pump the excess oil back up to your oil tank and should settle back to normal. Foamy is normal. Do not rev your bike just let it run at a high idle until this sets its level, about 2 minutes. If you own a pre '92 bike, it may even puke oil out its breather hose. If your breather hose goes to your air cleaner, I would recommend pulling it out of the air cleaner to allow it to puke into a catch can, or on your shop floor, if you're not fussy. Sometimes this is a lot of oil and it really freaks people out. This

is very normal for these older bikes that have been sitting for a few months. Let her run until she stops puking out the breather... shut it down and top it back up with fresh oil.

Now for me, it seems every year I park my bikes with issues that need to be dealt with and most times I forget what those issues are until I take her out for its first ride...and then DAMN!!! There it is... that problem I forgot all about. So now I make a list in the winter and leave it on the bike as a reminder list of things to do over the winter. So if you made yourself a list, now is the time to shorten it.

Every spring, it seems to me we have more people come into the shop with a wobble issue/concern. In *most* cases, this is just flat spots in the tires from sitting over the winter in the same spot with low air pressure. If your bike seems to have a wobble you did not notice before you parked it, this may very well be the case and the problem should diminish over time.

I prefer not to run old gas in my bike, so before I go for the first ride I drain the fuel and give it new life in the lawn mower's tank. Don't forget to leave just enough fuel to make it to the gas station to fill up with 94 octane. H-D recommends no less than 91 but I recommend you run 94 if you have had any performance work greater than a stage one done to your engine.

There are a few more things I could go on about getting your bike ready, but the sun is shining and it is time to get on my bike and ride. Ride safe, and have a great summer!

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