



HOT! **by Jackie Vaughan**

Hot summer days make a convection oven look positively chilly. Riding in hot weather presents its own challenges. However, rather than staying home and missing all the fun, with a little planning it is still possible to enjoy our favorite roads.

Dressing properly is very important. A T-shirt and shorts are not the answer. Exposed skin is not only dangerous in a crash, it's a major source of dehydration and sunburn. Add to that the long-term danger of skin cancer and covering up becomes the clear choice. Cover all exposed skin to reduce dehydration. There are some specialized clothes that purport to have UV resistance built in, but they are a bit on the pricey side. A long-sleeve cotton shirt, cotton jeans, and gloves, all normal safety wear, are the clothing of choice. Many riders use the old biker's trick of soaking the body of a heavy cotton sweatshirt in water, leaving as much water in the shirt as possible. The sleeves are left dry from the elbows down, as well as from the waist down, to allow for moisture wicking down. The wet shirt becomes an evaporative cooler that leaves the rider in blissful comfort for at least an hour.

Apply plenty of sunscreen to the face and back of the neck, and if gloves are not worn, to the backs of the hands. Look for a product that is strongly water-resistant so it won't run into the eyes from perspiration. Use at least SPF 30, and since sunscreen loses potency with age, make sure it's fresh. Most people fail to put on enough sunscreen and do not reapply throughout their ride.

Start the ride well-hydrated, taking in at least a quart of liquid before departure. Contrary to logic, this will not necessitate extra pit stops. Take in at least a quart of liquid such as water or sports drinks every hour. If the temperature or heat index is very high, double that intake, since fluid loss can top a gallon an hour. Riders who do not need to make a pit stop every couple of hours are dehydrating and should sharply increase their fluid intake.

Break the ride into segments with extended cool-off periods every couple of hours. These can be refreshment stops, points of interest, or just spending 30 or 40 minutes in a cool gas station, sipping a sports drink. Caffeine tends to increase dehydration, as does alcohol.

Know the signs of heat exhaustion (profuse sweating, dizziness, flushed face, weakness, muscle cramps) and heat stroke (no sweating, pale face, shallow respiration, collapse). Riders and co-riders should watch for them in themselves and in others. At the first signs, seek a cool place and cool the victim down as quickly as possible. In heat stroke, seek emergency medical help.

With a little preparation and common sense, beating the heat is a lot more fun than staying home.