



Motorcycle Seat Belts

(sort of) Motorcycles don't have seat belts, do they?

The next best thing to having seat belts would be the tires and they happen to be our biggest expense and our biggest concern. Seems everyday the tire life on Gold Wing 1800's is in my conversations with customers. And it seems there are quite a few experts out there telling people the ins and outs of tire wear, tire life and just about anything that comes up about motorcycle tires. So next time an expert is telling you how many miles you should get and why it wore down like it did get their name so I can talk to them. I have a few questions myself, especially how to become a motorcycle tire expert.

Motorcycle tires and their life is something that street bike riders have been complaining about for a long time. Most of the time the customers complain to me so I try very hard to sell tires that will keep the complaining to a minimum.

Sometimes trying to sell a tire to prevent complaining gets me griped out. It comes with the job but Ray Jones and Shawnee Honda don't make tires. We sell them and install them. For some it would seem I am responsible for the tires and their wear characteristics.

I do want to address a few things and give you my expert opinion. I have written about this before and I want to touch on it again because it is important. Tires on a motorcycle are like seat belts in a car. I can't make you wear them but I guarantee you your chances of surviving are better with them in an automobile crash. Your chances of preventing a mishap on your motorcycle are better with new tires.

Running your tires longer to save money is like only wearing your seat belt on odd days of the month. In a panic situation on your loaded Goldwing with a passenger, worn out tires are risky. I ride dirt bikes

and it is unbelievable what a new set of tires can make my bike drive like. I can get away with things that would be a crash on worn tires. As the tires wear I adjust what I can do knowing the bike will slip and slide.

The reason I bring that up is we don't push street bike tires hard enough to know those limits but when the time comes to panic stop or swerve the limits of new tires are significantly better. All we want them to do is hold for us. The choice is yours. The next time you are in the Shawnee Honda store ask me how many motorcycles we are doing wreck estimates on and we will inspect tires. Unscientifically about 80 % need tires. Would this prevent an accident?

We will never know but chances of having a car wreck are slim and I still reach for my seat belt every time. Not trying to sell tires here either! I am trying to change the way you judge your tires. They are a safety device installed on your bike to give you maximum protection in a panic situation. Getting a few extra thousand miles out of them could be hazardous to your health. Some that are reading this are saying I don't ride hard enough to know the difference and I am not going to be in a panic situation. You are probably right but what if you are?

As I have stated before motorcycle tires are very high quality. When I think about it I wonder why any company would even bother building them. Seems like a very risky business. Some of the motorcycle tires go on machines that have over 150 hp and will go 175 + mph. These companies take great pride in their products.

My bottom line is rider safety and the things riders do to not be safe. Worn out tires, car tires on motorcycles and overall some really bad choices motorcycle riders make leaves us in the industry shaking our heads. WHY! In my line of business there have been days when I get a phone call or read in the paper that someone I have known has lost their life from a motorcycle accident. It is part of this business

and it sucks. I hope I never have to experience it again and I don't want my conscious bothering me at night thinking we sacrificed quality for profit. We don't and never will. We want you to have a safe enjoyable ride.

Don't risk your health over worn out motorcycle tires. I don't know when the last time you felt the front tire slip on your bike going around a corner or if you ever have but it is terrifying. I recently took a motorcycle on a ride that had a very inexpensive front tire on it and when I went to lean and turn the front tire slipped about 6 inches. It is terrifying. I am sure that a tire could be made to last 20 or 30 thousand miles but I would not want to corner on it or try and stop and neither would you.

I wish Gold Wing tires would last longer I really do, but they don't and until I start making tires all we can do is just appreciate how well they work. Motorcycle tires are truly a work of art and we all can jump on our bikes and not have to worry about catastrophic failures from them. The tires are engineered to be 10 times better than we will ever need them to be and I am glad for that. The problem is they don't last a long time but we do not ever wonder if they are safe.

Thank them for that. A great meal doesn't last long either, but we sure enjoy it while it last.

Ride safe.

Ray Jones,
Service Manager,
Shawnee Honda