

TECH TALK: Tyre Safety

Tyres are the only points of contact between the motorcycle and the road. The total contact area between a motorcycle's two tyres and the road is approximately 100cm², so it's essential to protect the quality and performance of your tyres.

INSPECTION: Tyres must be inspected on a routine basis for irregular wear patterns, which can be an indication of incorrect inflation pressure, overloading or mechanical problems. An underinflated or overloaded tyre that is ridden for a prolonged period may suffer irreversible damage that can have serious consequences, even if the tyre is returned to correct inflation pressure.

Tyres should be inspected regularly, with particular attention paid to:

- The tread area, to detect the presence of debris, cuts, deterioration or irregular wear patterns;
- Sidewalls, to detect impact damage (from potholes or kerbs), cuts, cracking or abnormal deformation;
- The bead area, noting any trace of abrasions or rim damage.

WEAR: The primary function of the tread is adhesion with the road. As tyre wear progresses over time, the tyre's ability to evacuate water deteriorates; consequently, you should reduce speed on wet roads. Remember to check regularly for tyre wear, by observing tread depth and uniformity of the wear pattern.

A tyre's durability is dependent on several major factors:

- Some are within the rider's control, such as inflation pressure, loads carried, vehicle speed and riding style.
- Others are beyond the rider's control, and require adaptation of one's riding style: frequency of corners, type of road surface, ambient temperature.

Remember that mechanical problems can also cause premature wear, including warped rims, worn suspension components, loose steering-head bearings and/or frame misalignment. Any one of these factors can have a detrimental effect on tread life; a combination of several factors will cause significant wear.

INFLATION: Correct inflation is essential to the tyres' safety, comfort and durability. Maintaining the bike manufacturer's recommended inflation pressures has a positive effect on handling characteristics. It is also a major influence on the motorcycle's handling, both in a straight line and when cornering, even at moderate speeds and under braking.

Riding on underinflated tyres can cause premature wear, irreversible damage to the casing and, possibly, a catastrophic deflation. Tyres lose air gradually. It is essential to check pressure every 2 weeks, when the tyres are cold. If the pressure is checked during or after a ride, the tyres will be hot, which will increase the indicated pressure. Never deflate tyres when they are hot. If the pressure reading is lower than the recommended pressure, air must be added to the tyre. Keep in mind that the indicated pressure of a hot tyre can be as much as 4psi higher than the recommended cold pressure.

RUNNING-IN: During the first 100km of operation after new tyres have been fitted, the motorcycle should be ridden at moderate speed, and cornering angles should be increased progressively, until the tyre reaches its optimal performance.

WARM-UP: During the first 10 - 20km of each ride, travel at moderate speed until the tyres achieve operating temperature and optimal grip.

MIXING TYRES: All recommendations and precautions are based on equipping the motorcycle with the same brand tyres both front and rear to prevent unstable handling.