101 CRITICAL DAYS OF SUMMER 2014

Chapter 7
July 4, 2014

Risk management has a role in everything we do, both on and off duty. It continues to be the job of the safety professionals to provide guidance to all Airmen about the dangers of the season. Airmen use sound risk management every day on duty and, while the main focus of the Critical Days of Summer campaign is off duty activities, Airmen must use the same risk management techniques in all circumstances.

Chapter 7: Wild Hogs

Topic: Motorcycle Safety

As summer weather continues, motorcyclists spend more and more time riding. Whether it's just for an hour or a long-distance trip, be aware of becoming complacent about safety in mid-summer. Complacency can always be mitigated by applying the risk management steps (see Chapter 3) before your next ride.

In addition, if you didn't do a complete maintenance check before riding season began – there's still time to do one.

Here's the basic list of maintenance:

- **Check your T-CLOCS**
  - **T**: tires and wheels
  - **C**: controls
  - **L**: lights
  - **O**: oil and fluids
  - **C**: chassis
  - **S**: stand
- Look for any signs of leakage, such as stains underneath that indicate problems. Check steering head bearings for looseness or binding. To get the best performance out of a hydraulic fork change the fluid every year or two.
- Clean the battery terminals.
  - Check the electrolyte level (if caps are removable) and add distilled water as needed. (Warning: Electrolyte contains acid so avoid contact and wear eye protection. Baking soda and water will neutralize the acid.) Turn on the ignition briefly and note how bright the lights are. If the lights are dim or don't work, charge the battery. If the battery was fully discharged it's likely sulfated and needs replacement.
- Unless you put in fuel-stabilizer additives before storage, after several months the gasoline may begin to form deposits in carburetor jets and passages, and may also clog injectors and electric fuel pumps.
  - Remove the gas cap and peer into the tank with a small flashlight (switch it on first to avoid sparks), look for rust in steel tanks, and note if the fuel has sediment or other contamination. Give the gas a quick sniff. If it smells like old varnish the fuel system may need to be drained, flushed and the fuel filter replaced. Carburetor float bowls (if equipped) must also be drained before new gas is added. If a motorcycle won't start because the fuel system is gummed up it may require disassembly and a thorough cleaning.
- Check the oil level and note the color of the oil, as old, dirty oil leaves sludge and deposits in the engine.
  - If it is dark or the level is low change the oil and filter before starting the engine. If the oil isn't too bad it's better to start the engine and allow it to warm up to allow contaminants to be suspended in the oil, and then drain it. If your motorcycle has a separate transmission or primary-chain case oil supply, service that, too. Always recycle used oil and dispose of filters properly.
- Inspect tires for cracks, wear and damage.

    - Tires more than about 5 or 6 years old should be replaced even if they aren't worn out. After a thorough inspection inflate the tires to the recommended pressure in the owner's manual.
- Check your maintenance records and schedule to determine if the motorcycle is due for a major service, including a tune-up and valve adjustment.
    - If not, it's still a good idea to check the spark plugs for condition and measure the gap. Put a little anti-seize compound on the threads and torque properly – do not over-tighten them. Inspect the plug wires and boots (if equipped) and clean or replace them if they look worn or cracked. Also check the air filter and replace as needed.
- Liquid-cooled engines should have the antifreeze/coolant checked and flushed and replaced every two years, as old coolant causes corrosion.
    - Also replace the hoses, thermostat and radiator cap every five years. After starting the engine test the operation of the electric cooling fan. It should come on during extended idling.
- Inspect the brake linings and rotors or drums for wear.
    - Check the brake fluid, which should be changed every two years, and if it looks dark replace it. Refer to the shop manual for the bleeding procedure, especially on ABS systems.
- Control cables should be serviced every year.
    - Check the throttle cables and clutch cable (if equipped) for free travel and lube with special cable lubricant.
- Inspect the sprockets and chain (if equipped) and make sure it's properly lubed and adjusted.
    - Belt drives and sprockets should be inspected and adjustment checked. Shaft-drive machines should have the gear lube level checked and changed if it has been several years since this was done.
- Start the engine and allow it to warm up gently without revving. After the engine is up to normal operating temperature, check the idle speed and adjust if needed.
    - Test all controls, lights and accessories to ensure they're working properly. Addressing these items before you ride can save a lot trouble down the road.

Now that you've checked all the basics of you motorcycle, make sure you're just as road ready as you were at the beginning of the season.

- **Road-Ready Gear Only.**
    - Protect your body with long pants and sleeves and boots to stabilize your feet and ankles. And, even though it's hot outside, don't forget a leather jacket.
- **Maintain a valid motorcycle-only license** and current training.
- Check AFI91-207, 3.5.4. to be sure you've got the right personal protective equipment.

Motorcycle riders should never think they've got an immune bubble around them and accidents only happen to others. The following incident occurred unexpectedly:

An Airman participated in a group motorcycle ride on a route frequently traveled by motorcycle enthusiasts. He was familiar with the area and rode the route several times. He came upon an s-curve, negotiated towards the right and felt uncomfortable with the way the motorcycle was leaning. He brought it back to a level position and drifted into the oncoming lane. He collided with another motorcycle causing pieces of both motorcycles to go flying and ejecting both riders. The Airman slammed in the road surface with his entire body. He was air-lifted to a local emergency room where he was placed in a medically induced coma

for several days while treated for multiple injuries. After a couple of weeks he recovered but still spent an additional month and a half on convalescent leave.

The Centers for Disease Control provides a handbook with a wealth of information for motorcycle operators:

More resources:
http://online2.msf-usa.org/msf/Default.aspx#&panel1-2
http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/Motorcycles
http://www.forcardrivers.com/index.html
http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/mc/states/index.html