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HOW AND WHEN TO DO PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

By: Cj Banfill

Hi everyone! As we go through preventative Maintenance I will try to explain what to look for and why. I find it is easier for people to understand things if explained why and not just left with what to look for. This leads to awareness on many things by feel and handling before actually seeing which is even better and may save on purchasing parts or experiencing road side problems.

I recommend that even if you do not wrench that you acquire a repair manual to go along with your Owner's Manual for your specific motorcycle. The information is more detailed and will help reinforce what I will be teaching you along the way. I can teach you how to do much of your maintenance and repairs that **YOU** feel comfortable in trying. The more you do yourself will keep you on the road longer instead of suffering PMS (Parked Motorcycle Syndrome) waiting for your mechanic to fit you into his/her busy schedule.

Preventative maintenance is a must for all motorcycles. By doing preventative maintenance before something happens could save you and your motorcycle from serious injury or damage.

Maintaining your cycle means regular pre-ride checks, monthly and annual checks and maintenance, including tune-ups. Remember your motorcycle is only as good as you take care of it. Keeping up with proper maintenance could be part

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of what could save your life if an accident should take place. None of us plan for such things but should always keep that possibility in the back of our minds so it keeps us alert to all that we can possible prevent.

1. Always check your tire treads at least once a week, if not before every ride. Look for cuts and scrapes on your tires, which can easily cause a blowout. Check for proper tire pressure (check manual for air pressure recommendations). Remember air pressure recommendation usually changes from riding one-up to two-up. Many blowouts happen from low air pressure.

This recommendation also can change for those of you who have air shocks. Many of you also have adjustment on your on your shocks for riding two up. USE IT!! If riding one or two up be aware of what pressure you should have in your shocks. The air pressure in your tires and shocks greatly affects the way your bike will handle and corner. BE AWARE! DO NOT OVER INFLATE TIRES, ESPECIALLY IN HOT CONDITIONS/CLIMATES. Inspect valve stems for dry rot (and rim cuts on tube stems).

2. Check both wheels for loose or missing spokes. Check the rims for dents & chips, as air can slowly leak out. Lift wheel and spin it, check for looseness or bent wheel. If either exists it will wobble as it rotates around. Tighten or fix immediately as your control of your cycle is limited.
3. Inspect the controls for smooth operation (clutch, brake, choke) and watch for kinks and broken strands in your cables. Put the recommended lubricant on the moveable parts and at either end of the cables.
4. For those with chain drive, check the sprockets for worn teeth and oil the chain. Check chain tension; adjust according to your manual recommendation.

For those with belt drive, check belt for cracks, missing pieces. Replace immediately upon sight of being frayed.



For those with shaft drive, make sure bolts are tight and check gearbox primary and secondary oil levels. One is located just above shifter. Take bolt out and you should see gear oil at the neck. If not, fill to the neck. The secondary is located on the rear wheel and has a filler bolt. Open this and stick your finger in or you will see drips when the bolt is opened. If not, fill until you can see the gear oil.

5. Now is the real test. While the bike is cold check around for loose and or missing bolts, nuts, cotter pins (things that look something like bobby pins with the ends bent). Especially engine mount bolts, frame bolts and such. Time and vibration does loosen these things. I just recently found my bike missing an engine mounting bolt nut when I was replacing my crash bar. These bolts keep your engine in place and even though the bolt was there it was not tight due to lack of the nut and this causes stress on the frame and causes undo vibration. Keep your bike clean so it is easier to spot missing parts.
6. Do an over all inspection of the bike for leaks. Not all leaks reach the floor to alert you there is a problem. Or if it is parked on dirt, the ground would absorb it before you would know of the problem. If you do your tune-ups regularly, the motor oil and gear oil would be clean and harder to see especially on chrome or aluminum engines. The engines that are black are sometimes easier to see something wet. But just keep and eye out, as it could be something as simple as a loose screw or bolt to something more serious as a blown gasket. The sooner caught the less damage that may happen or repair that needs to be done.
7. Adjust your brakes so that when they are applied fully, the wheel is locked (see your manual). Check master cylinders for clean brake fluid & proper levels. Irregular or jerky stopping may mean a warped rotor or drum. Inspect pads/liners and replace if needed. Brakes are possibly the most

important component on a bike. Don't bet your life on worn brakes. Don't let a front brake grab on wet pavement.

8. Check your headlight high/low beam, tail/brake light, turn signals, instrument and driving lights. Test kill switch and inspect overall wiring for chafe. Use wire ties to secure loose wires. Spray WD-40 into switches & lock will keep them working and will also keep them from freezing in the colder weather. Carry a spare headlight bulb (if you don't use a sealed beam) right inside your headlight housing. Then it is right at your fingertips if needed and it is protected from breakage.
9. Check battery levels and clean terminals. Baking Soda & water will clean off any corrosion that is on your posts. Use Vaseline, oil or grease will help prevent future corrosion.
10. If the bike has a fuse box, check them and get spares. (carry spares on your bike, as this fuse runs many bike main electrical systems. No fuse, no go!!)
11. Inspect fuel filters and screens for dirt, paint chips and check lines for chafe and dry rot regularly. Dirt can clog and keep your bike from being fuel efficient or running smoothly. And will clog carburetors.

** INSPECT your motorcycle carefully, and correct what could be a potential hazard. That's the only way to spot problems before they cause an accident.*(continued)*

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Last Updated: **Monday, January 13, 2003 - 01:37 PM**

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