

ANY QUESTION

ANSWERED ✓

If we don't know the answer, we'll find the person who does

OWNING & RIDING

Q How do I fix my diesel dilemma?

My GSX-R1000 started smoking badly on the overrun at the end of a trackday. At first I thought I had done a valve, but when I investigated further I realised that in my rush to get out for the final session I managed to use fuel from a borrowed can that had some diesel lurking in it. I know that unleaded in a diesel vehicle can knacker the injectors if you run it. Am I faced with a similar scenario to fix my bike?
Alex Lyle, email

Answered by Paul Curran, PCR Performance
It's not such a big deal running diesel through a petrol injector system as it is running petrol through a diesel. You'll need to get the tank off and flush it through with clean petrol a couple of times, then get fresh fuel through at a rate of knots to wash away any residue. A couple of dyno runs is the most convenient way of doing this. I'd treat your bike to a new set of spark plugs too to say 'sorry'.



A dyno run with fresh fuel will flush out diesel from the injectors



Q Why is my air-cooled R1200GS starting itself?

I've just come back from a tour through Spain on my air-cooled BMW R1200GS and it's developed an electrical gremlin. If I turn the key the engine fires up before I press the start button. A Spanish dealer did a diagnostic check, but there are no fault codes.
Richard Gower, email

Answered by Evan Davies, Off Road Skills
GSs from that period have a funny barrel-type combined start and killswitch. In dusty conditions, dirt gets into the switch so that it sticks on. If you soak it in warm water, allow it to dry and get the WD40 onto it, it should behave itself again.



Dirt in the barrel will make GS start up

Q How can I get my sluggish CBF1000 running right again?

The engine warning light illuminated on my 2012 Honda CBF1000 dash when I was 150 miles from home. As it was still running and the temperature was steady, I rode it home. It was noticeably sluggish and the fuel consumption went up too. What's going on?
David Low, Farnham

Answered by Scott Bullett, Doble Motorcycles
If you're in the habit of blipping the throttle as you kill the engine it causes the servo controlling the exhaust valve to over-rotate and the valve to stick. The ECU spots this and the bike goes into 'failsafe' mode, which makes it sluggish. Pop into a Honda dealer and they will free the valve and install a software update to prevent a repeat.

Q Does no MoT mean no cover?

We have had our 1982 Moto Guzzi Spada insured with the same company for the past 10 years or so. Since 2011 the bike has not been on the road, so it has been registered SORN and of course the MoT has lapsed. At renewal time I asked the insurers if there was a specific policy to cover bikes not being ridden. I was told, very clearly, that the bike had not been insured for the last few years because we hadn't informed them it was SORN. The broker also said it wouldn't be insured if there wasn't a valid MoT certificate. Is this normal? If the bike hasn't been insured, I'd like our money back.
Heather Codling, email

Answered by Christian Evitt, Carole Nash Insurance
Most policies have a clause that the vehicle must be 'roadworthy'. However, any prospective claim for a SORNed bike would only be for fire or theft, and I think the insurer would find it difficult to reject that claim. The assessor might look to lower the value in the absence of a MoT certificate, but if you had photos to show its condition you'd be able to negotiate a fair valuation.
When a customer with a fully comp policy tells us the bike is going SORN we generally drop the level of cover to third party, fire and theft. I'd always advise anybody when shopping around for cover to discuss their plans for the bike over the whole 12 months, so you can get the cover tailored for you.



Check clutch operation on a used SH300

Q Will Honda SH300 survive my winter rides

I'm thinking of getting a Honda SH300 scooter for the commute over winter - are there any weak points on the bike I should look out for?
Stuart Hawkins, Ilford

Answered by Colin Barnes, Chas Bikes
A clean one is certainly worth a look, but pay attention to the clutch operation. What finishes off a lot of scooters is their riders sitting at the lights revving the motor for a quick getaway and holding it on the brakes. If anything the tickover needs to be set low enough so that the clutch doesn't start to bite. If it's not set up, a clutch on an SH300 can be gone in 10,000 miles and it'll cost £300 to replace.

TRAVEL & TOURING

Q How do I get my hands on cash during a big trip?

Answered by Chris Scott - author of the Adventure Motorcycling Handbook

Financing an overland adventure will test your resources, commitment and attitude. But once you manage to fund the big trip, handling your money on the road is pretty straightforward. Access cash from a secure, well-lit ATM, but pay out only with cash. ATMs are widespread now so there's no need to carry masses of cash. Make sure you

check how much your bank charges for withdrawals before you leave, as some banks have extortionate exchange rates and fees for using your card abroad. There are plenty of credit card firms who don't charge and include some sort of travel insurance too. Some travellers like the back-up of a hidden stash of cash, as well as dummy wallets to hand over to muggers. You can always stash a couple of hundred in the bike too, behind fairings or safely under the seat.

Dollars and in some places Euros are the best hard currencies, backed up by at least two unblocked debit or credit cards, but remember that not all types work in foreign ATMs. With a couple of exceptions the currency black market is a thing of the past so evaluate the risk before diving into the shark pool and generally keep your wits about you. As long as you employ common sense you'll be fine, just don't pay for things while displaying big wads of notes in your wallet.



Whatever currency it is, don't go flashing your cash around

TECH WATCH

Q How does wax help keep my bike running cool?

A key component in a bike's cooling system is the thermostat. This is a valve that closes when the engine is cold, preventing coolant from flowing to the radiator, then opens as the temperature rises. It's reasonably obvious why it's needed: before an engine gets up to normal operating temperature it uses more fuel, and the lubrication is less efficient so it wears faster. Allowing coolant to pass through the radiator from the outset means heat is being lost that is better used in warming up the engine. Once that temperature is reached, however, heat must be shed to prevent overheating, so the coolant must be allowed to flow.

What is less obvious is how a typical bike (or car) thermostat works, and the surprise is it depends entirely on a humble blob of wax. When cold, a spring holds the thermostat's valve closed, but as it heats up, the blob of wax in a



Wax expands when warm, opening the thermostat

central container expands, pushing a rod outwards which forces open the valve.

The wax inside the valve starts off in a solid state, then turns to liquid as it gets hotter - called a change of phase by physicists. It seems odd that wax should expand in the change from solid to liquid as we're more used to ice, which contracts when it melts.

The large expansion rate means the valve in a thermostat opens wide, allowing a good flow of coolant. Typically it's fully open

at around 82°C, and you can test a suspect thermostat by dropping it in a pan of water. Heat it up on the cooker and it should open as you get close to the boiling point. A 100°C thermometer will confirm it's opening at the right temperature.

If the thermostat stays closed or doesn't open fully your engine will quickly overheat - it's like having no radiator. If it doesn't shut properly your engine will take too long to reach its ideal operating temperature, so will be less fuel efficient and will wear more quickly.

MCN LAW

Your legal questions

Q I don't remember the accident, so do I take the blame?

I was in an accident while overtaking. The driver who hit me said I was over the speed limit and riding dangerously. He said he was attempting to turn right and was indicating. I can't remember the accident but there are varying witness statements. Some say I was speeding, others say not. Some say the other driver was turning appropriately while others say he pulled out fairly sharply. All this means my solicitors are considering dropping my claim. Although I can't remember, surely it doesn't mean I should take the all the blame?
Ed Davies, Devizes

When looking at liability, most cases are decided on the evidence of independent witnesses. If you are unable to remember the accident it will cause some difficulties, but that does not mean you will not be able to recover any compensation. Speed is always difficult for

'Judges consider witnesses' opinions on speed very cautiously'

witnesses to estimate and judges consider witnesses' opinions on speed very cautiously. Your solicitor could consider obtaining evidence from an accident reconstruction expert who will try and determine what speed all parties were travelling at and for how long you would have been visible to the turning vehicle. In an accident such as yours there is likely to be some blame apportioned to you because courts tend to look rather unfavourably on motorcyclists overtaking near junctions. It is likely that any evidence from an expert is going to be critical. That said, such experts are not cheap so whether it is a reasonable expense will depend on the likely value of your claim.



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Bikelawyer
Motorcycle Accident Solicitors

Q How can I ensure my bike stays secure in the garage?

My bike is going to be tucked away in my garage more and more as the days draw in. I've got decent locks on all the doors, but what other security measures should I consider?
Charles Kelly, email

Answered by Chris Dabbs, MCN
A Passive Infrared (PIR) alarm that picks up motion, like the Xena XA901, is a good start if you are within earshot of your garage and you're a light enough sleeper for the alarm to wake you.

A Thatcham-approved ground anchor and lock and chain means the bike can't be manhandled out quickly, but position it so that you can chain the bike around a frame member. If your bike does get lifted, a tracking device is about the only chance you've got that it will be recovered. The locating system can be GPS, use the mobile phone GSM network, or a VHF radio signal. The advantage of radio is that a signal can still be picked up when it's hidden away, unlike GPS and GSM.



£24.99

Xena XA901 alarm



£179.99

Road Angel Biketrac, two-year sub



£44.95

Mammoth ground anchor



£141.99

ABUS Victory X-Plus 68 & loop