

Hydroplaning

Recently a Goldwing rider in Texas lost control of his new GL-1800 while riding in a thunderstorm. He thought he lost control because he hydroplaned. He was on his way home from a group ride but had left the group to go to his home. He saw the storm coming and could tell from its blackness that it would be a bad one. He considered pulling off and waiting for it to pass but decided it might not be that bad and he had ridden in thunderstorms before. The rain was very heavy and a SUV in front of him slowed down to about 25 mph. He felt this was too slow so he passed the SUV and accelerated back to about 60 mph. Shortly he felt the back of the motorcycle shake and the next he knew he was sliding down the road watching his pride and joy slide along in front of him. He suffered only bruises but his new 1800 was a total loss. He blamed his loss of control on hydroplaning and chastised himself for not slowing down.

Hydroplaning occurs when tires cannot channel all the water out from under the tire, or each patch of tire that rests on the road and gives you traction. The tire patches are riding on a layer of water instead of the pavement. Many different factors affect the speed a tire will hydroplane: water depth, speed, weight of vehicle, width of tire, depth of tread, and tread pattern. All tires will hydroplane with the right combination of speed and water depth.

If you hydroplane, stay off the brakes and steer straight ahead. Unless you are very fortunate you're probably going down. Fortunately, you can prevent hydroplaning. Keep your speed down. You might want to slow by a third. Goldwing tires with good tread and properly inflated will most likely hydroplane at speeds above 50 mph. They can hydroplane at lower speeds if conditions are right. Riding in the tire tracks of another vehicle will help by their tires displacing some of water so your tires don't have to work so hard. Remember, the best thing is to avoid the hazardous situation by pulling off the road. Second best is to slow down. Keep good tires on your motorcycle and keep them properly inflated. The lower the pressure the lower the hydroplaning speed. Stay out of puddles. They can cause you to hydroplane.

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