

Long Term Motorcycle Storage Tips For Winter or Any Extended Period of Time

If you won't be able to ride your motorcycle for a while, don't despair: this step-by-step instruction will help you prep your bike for the winter months ahead.

It is important to avoid the damage that could result from rust, corrosion or inactivity. You will want your bike to emerge from deep storage in the best condition possible for that first ride of the next season.

Items you may need:

- The manufacturer recommended oil and filter to change your oil.
- Fuel stabilizer: Sta-Bil or any manufacturer recommended brand.
- Engine cleaner and WD-40.
- A battery tender.
- Brake fluid, hydraulic clutch fluid, chain lube and coolant may be necessary.
- Wax for painted finishes and chrome polish, if needed.
- A bike cover or breathable fabric sheet.
- Cleaning items: water, soap, degreaser, chain cleaner (if applicable) and towels for exterior cleaning

Prepare Your Engine, Exhaust and Battery for Long Term Storage

The first thing to do to prepare your engine for storage is to ensure the engine oil is clean. Old oil will trap contaminants and damage the rubber seals. This is best done by changing the oil and filter. Follow manufacturers' procedures.

Next, you will want to ensure that the fuel delivery system is prepared for inactivity. Add stabilizer to the tank and top off with gas. Run the engine for five (5) minutes to allow the stabilized fuel to circulate through to the carbs or fuel injection system. You can select the Sta-Bil brand or the recommended manufacturer brand stabilizer. These steps will avoid the accumulation of moisture which results when tanks are not filled to capacity. This is especially important because methanol blended fuels deteriorate more quickly.

It is important to protect your piston and cylinder rings from potential rust if the bike is in storage for more than six months. You will need to remove each spark plug and pour a tablespoon of fresh engine oil inside. Alternatively, you can spray fogging oil inside. After adding the oil ground the ignition leads and turn the engine over several times to spread the oil before replacing the spark plugs.

Spray some WD-40 (“WD” means water displacement) into the exhaust pipe(s) in order to keep water away. Keeping the moisture out of the exhaust pipe(s) will prevent rust from developing. You can also keep water and critters out by stuffing the intake and exhaust with crumpled plastic bags.

Clean battery leads and attach a battery tender to your battery to keep it charged and ready to go when you’re ready to bring the bike out of storage.

Brake, Clutch and Coolant

If your brake fluid is in need of changing, do so before long-term storage. Brake fluid should be changed after the first year, and every 2 years after. Similarly, hydraulic clutch fluid should be changed before you store your bike; both systems may suffer failure if moisture is present. Also, make sure your coolant is fresh, as deposits can form with old fluid. Coolant should be changed every 4 years.

Cleaning Your Motorcycle for Long Term Winter Storage

Dirt and grime will damage motorcycles, both cosmetically and mechanically, so use these tips to preserve your bike during long term storage:

- Wash your motorcycle before storage; and be sure to let your bike completely dry before covering it, as trapped condensation can cause rust.
- Use a degreaser to clean sludge from the outside of the engine.
- After washing your bike, apply wax to any painted surfaces, and chrome polish to chrome; this will keep moisture away.
- If your bike is chain driven, you should clean and lube the chain. Be sure to use the recommended chain cleaner to avoid damage to the o-rings.
- If you have secured, inside storage (out of the weather) available you should use a breathable piece of fabric or a bike cover to keep dust off.
- If your bike must be exposed to the elements, you may not want to use a cover on the bike. A cover can trap moisture and will do more harm than good.

Unload the Suspension

If your motorcycle has a center stand, use it for long term storage. If you don’t have a center stand you may want to consider a motorcycle stand or chock.

Inflate your tires to the maximum recommended pressure. This will maintain their shape, since cooling temperatures will make the pressurized air contract. If the ground might potentially freeze, try to keep the tires off of the ground using wood blocks.