

Safety Check ✓

From the Safety Chick

“When do you stop riding for winter?”
“Do you ride in November?”
“The high temperature is only going to be in the 50s.”

These are a few of the comments I have been asked lately by some of our new riders. Probably other riders in the club have heard the same questions. Many riders do stop riding when the temps dip below 50 or 40 or whatever. Some new riders have expressed concern for our sanity . . . how can you ride if it is so cold?

I can't really speak for anyone else's sanity, not even my own. I will say that riding in the cooler months, even winter, can be very enjoyable. The club continues Show N Go Rides throughout the winter as long as the temperature is above freezing (32°F) and ice is not a factor on the roads. See the Ride List for details.

A very important part of riding in cooler/cold weather is to dress appropriately. For suggestions on winter riding I have turned to the best source I know, Chicago Bike Winter. CBW is a group of riders dedicated to winter riding, they have a great website www.bikewinter.org. Look there for lots of tried and true solutions to coping with the weather. They offer information on bike handling, maintenance and personal and bike essentials.

Their dressing suggestions include:

1. Dress in layers – a three-layer system works well. A base layer made of a wicking fabric, a middle layer for insulation and an outer layer that offers protection from wind and precipitation. Synthetic fabrics usually work well than cotton, though silk is also popular. Many “cycling” jackets have zippers in the armpits, allowing the cyclist to have cross ventilation if they get to warm. Yes, it is possible to get too warm.
2. A variety of pants are available, again a layer system works well. Start with long underwear, synthetic or silk. Tights or light pants can be the middle layer. Then add a wind block or rain pant. Ski tights with a wind block are popular and are available in varying weights.

Keeping the extremities warm is harder than the torso or legs.

3. Protect your eyes and ears. A variety of suggestions for ears include: headband, balaclava, or a thin cap that fits under the helmet. There are helmet covers available to block wind and rain. Don't forget you sunglasses. Here's a tip I haven't tried but I will this year. “Treat the lenses of your sunglasses with a bit of gel toothpaste to prevent fogging. DO NOT use a toothpaste with baking soda as it will scratch the lenses.”
4. Keeping feet warm is very important. Multiple layers of socks help, wool socks, synthetic booties for over the shoe protection or chemical toe warmers are all popular.
5. Using our hands is a pretty important part of cycling. Shifting, braking, signaling and steering – pretty important. Hands also need protection. Layers work here too. A liner with a water repellent or wind block outer glove may work. The “lobster glove” is used by a number of riders.

If you decide to ride during the cooler weather just remember, safety is always important. Be visible, ride smart and ride safe.