

# APPAREL PRO: URBAN & COMMUTER GEAR

**M**y partner commutes to work every day. Rain, shine, cold or extreme heat, he suits up head to toe and heads out to face traffic on the LA freeways. Personally, I think that these daily commuters are some of the most exposed riders on bikes. They're doing the same thing day after day, riding the same pathways, and often drivers get complacent or distracted on their way to and from work. For this reason I think commuting riders need the most protective apparel possible.

I'm a long distance and touring rider, with a lot of dual sport thrown in, so it was interesting for me to open both of our closets and actually compare our moto wear. My surprising conclusion was that the apparel we wear both commuting and touring is remarkably similar, with good armor, plenty of venting, and with waterproofing and layering options. The only real difference is the length of our playlists inside our pockets.

"When I think of commuter gear, I think of safety, and that's the most important thing," said Jeff Laird, national marketing manager at MTA Distributing. "Visibility and breathability are also important. Having the three-layer design in the Olympia gear lets you remove a layer, or add a layer, because sometimes in the mornings it can be 47° and last week it was over 100°."

The bar is set quite high in the commuter category by MTA Distributing's Olympia Apparel line, which has some of the most versatile commuter suits options I've seen. The three-layer design gives the rider the ability to customize the jacket to whatever they're doing by adding layers or removing them, and adding and subtracting different levels of armor. There's an insulating jacket and the outer shell, and the removable rain jacket is sized in such a way that it can be worn inside or outside the jacket. That's right, the rain shell is built large enough to be worn over the cordura outer shell if desired.

High visibility is an option that many consumers look for in their commuter gear. It makes the rider more visible both on and off the bike. Unfortunately, high-visibility materials don't match every consumer's color wheel, but enough customers request it that it makes sense to stock it. "The advantage of hi viz is being seen, of course. It grabs a little bit more attention and makes people aware of the rider," said Laird.

Stocking commuter apparel isn't all your dealership needs to do. The sales people in the department need to know how to fit it to consumers so that it's both comfortable and protective. Very often customers choose looser apparel (including helmets!) because of comfort, foregoing the safety of having well-fitted gear that stays where it's supposed to when they need it to. The onus is upon us, the professionals, to see that the consumer understands the tradeoffs.

Motorcycle commuters face some of the most challenging and dangerous driving conditions there are for motorcyclists. It makes sense to outfit our customers in highly protective and comfortable apparel so they'll wear it every time they ride, not just when the temperature is moderate. By stocking well designed and well vented apparel you'll be doing your part to make sure they keep coming back to your shop again and again. ↙

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*Above: Proper gear can take riders through all kinds of conditions. Below: Hi-viz gear adds an element of safety as well as style.*



*Commuter gear options provide safety and comfort.*