

APPAREL PRO: THE BEST OF

Our resident apparel expert, Alisa Clickenger, has been busy in 2017! Not only has she written this column for us each month, but she has travelled the world, leading Women's Motorcycle Tours. Alisa gets to live the life we all dream about on a regular basis, and she also puts her gear to the test so she knows what works and what doesn't. In this month's column we highlight some of the segments covered over the past year. From commuter gear to full-face helmets, Alisa gives sound advice on selling and the technical aspects of all the gear your customers use.

Urban & Commuter Gear (July)

My 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°."

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.

Full-Face Helmets (April)

Recently, I was looking at full-face helmets at a local dealership. A variety of top brands were on hand, a range of price points was represented and there was even a mirror to check how the helmet looked... yet it was also one of the worst shopping experiences of my life! The utter lack of product knowledge the salesman had about features and the fitting of helmets was astonishing!

While graphics like the Marvel helmets above are the icing on the cake, fit and weight are two of the most important features to point out to customers considering a full-face helmet.

More than most consumers, I understand that very often people in dealerships have to wear many hats. But given the

importance of a proper-fitting helmet and the profitability per square foot packed into full-face helmets, this is the one area of the showroom that shouldn't be left to "the new guy" to bumble his way through. High-end helmets are also an area where dealers clearly have the upper hand over the discount mail-order operations – you can't try on a helmet on a web page! Yet Helmet Fitting 101 is a class many dealerships are failing... miserably!

"The fit of a helmet is a huge deal," said Steve Blakeney, marketing director at Sullivans, Inc. "It can be an entry-level helmet or a more expensive one, proper fit is the common denominator. In fact, fit becomes even more important on the lower cost helmets because your entry-level riders have a tendency to buy their helmets too big. It is critically important that you can properly fit them when they walk into your dealership. There is no substitute for properly trained and knowledgeable staff."



Rainsuits (March)

There are a lot of good reasons to ride a motorcycle to the airport here in Southern California. If not to beat the hellish LA traffic, there's always the free parking perk to consider. These two pluses definitely cancel

out the awkwardness of balancing a piece of roller luggage on the pillion pad of my bike.

In my case, these were more than enough to overcome the fact that rain was predicted for the day of my return.

All manufacturers have the waterproofing dialed in these days, so as Steve Blakeney, marketing director for Sullivans/ Joe Rocket says, "It's the motorcycle-friendly bells and whistles added to them that really make one suit better than the other."

Comfort liners made of mesh or nylon, help ease the garment on and off and keep it from sticking to you. Vents help the garments breath and keep the rider from becoming soaked from the inside out.

When stocking rain suits look to stock products with Velcro (hook and loop) cuff closures, waterproof pockets and burn-resistant leg inserts to prevent melting or burns from hot exhausts. Try them on yourself before buying a whole batch because rain pant legs should fit over riding boots easily. Many customers like High Visibility reflective highlights for their rain wear, even if they normally don't ride in Hi Viz apparel. Also, look for specific ladies sizing rather than "one size fits all." Then the only thing left to do is to remember to pack the rainsuit. ↵