

C-SIG – Riding in Adverse Weather

1. Headwind

- a. Move back on the seat.
- b. Hands in the drops if you're comfortable pedaling in that position.
- c. Bend at the hips to lower your upper body as low as possible; keep your elbows in. Make your position as aerodynamic as possible.
- d. Zip up and cinch in any loose clothing to keep it from billowing. (Many windbreaker jackets have a cinch cord around the bottom.)
- e. Downshift to a lower gear. Don't try to fight a head wind. Accept the fact that you're not going to go as fast as you normally would. Even in a lower gear you're going to expend more energy riding against the wind, so make sure you conserve enough energy to make it home. A lower gear also makes it easy to make quick adjustments by either speeding up or slowing down your cadence. If you're in a high gear and are pushing with a slower cadence, a strong gust of wind might cause you to fall because you can't push against it in the higher gear. If you're spinning in a lower gear, you can make the adjustment and stay upright.

2. Cross wind

- a. Lower your center of gravity. Very similar to making yourself aerodynamic. Move your weight back on the seat and lower your upper body. This provides less surface for the wind to hit, as well as making you more stable by keeping your center of gravity low.
- b. Keep your hands loose on the bars. If you have a death grip on the bars, every change in wind pressure will cause an exaggerated movement of the bike. A looser grip will allow the bike to flow with changes in the wind. You'll still move side to side in a strong cross wind, but you'll have more control over how far you swing.
- c. Keep your core muscles engaged so you can shift your balance quickly. In a steady cross wind, you'll be leaning or pressing your body to that side (into the wind) to keep the bike upright. If the wind pressure suddenly lets up, the bike will quickly swing to that side. You need to shift your weight to the other side to counter the swing. As much as possible you should maintain your line by shifting your weight rather than trying to steer the bike with your hands.
- d. Stay in a lower gear so you can make quick adjustments by either speeding up or slowing down your cadence.

3. Rain

a. Visibility

- i. Make yourself visible to others. Use front & rear lights. Wear bright, highly visible clothing. Wear bright colored gloves so that any hand signals you give to drivers are visible.
- ii. Make it easier for you to see. Wear light yellow or clear lenses in your cycling glasses. Wear a visor on your helmet or a cycling cap under it to keep rain out of your eyes and off your glasses.

b. Road conditions

- i. A light rain will initially make the road surface quite slippery. The rain mixes with the oily residue on the road and forms a slick coating. In a heavy rain, this will eventually wash away, but in a light rain or intermittent showers, the surface may remain slippery.
- ii. Any metal surface, such as grates or plates, will be even more slippery than the road surface. Don't use the brakes when riding across a metal plate; Keep your weight centered and either stop pedaling or keep a light but steady pressure on the pedals. Any increase in pedal pressure could cause the rear wheel to skid out.
- iii. White road markings, such as crosswalks, are also more slippery than the road surface. Avoid hitting the brakes when crossing these road markings.
- iv. Use caution when cornering. Your wheels can slide out from under you if you corner too fast in wet conditions.
- v. Try to avoid riding through large puddles – you don't know what they're hiding. There could be a deep pothole under the water. If you approach an underpass with water stretched across the entire road, be very cautious – it could be a lot deeper than you think.
- vi. Beware of wet leaves – they are very slippery.

c. Your bike

- i. You are more likely to get a flat tire on a wet road. This is because debris will stick to your wet tire and eventually work itself in. Make sure you have all you need to change a flat. (Also, if riding in rain in France, you're more likely to get a flat because the asphalt contains a kind of grit that works its way to the surface in the rain – to prevent the road from being as slippery – and is sharp enough to work into a tire.)

- ii. Clean & lube your bike when you get home. While carbon and aluminum don't corrode the way a classic steel frame might, there are nonetheless parts of your bike that will be adversely affected by riding in rain. The chain and rear derailleur, in particular, will need to be cleaned thoroughly because road grit will have gotten into the links and jockey wheels. Also clean your wheel rims and check your brake pads for grit imbedded in them.
- iii. If you've ridden in rain a lot over a short period, you might want to take your bike into the shop to have the bottom bracket & hubs checked. These parts can also be adversely affected by water and grit.

4. Snow and Ice

- a. **Don't ride.** Seriously, unless you are a determined bike commuter, you should not be out in icy conditions, especially on a road bike with skinny, high-pressure tires. (If you're on a trail and have studded tires, different story.)
- b. But if you're caught out in snow while riding, your biggest worries will be visibility and slippery roads. See 3a above for visibility. If you're on a road bike and forced to ride in snow, you can let a little air out of your tires to give them more grip on the road surface. Ride slowly, keeping steady pressure on the pedals. There isn't much you can do if you hit a patch of ice under the snow – you'll probably go down.