

**More On Smokey Bandits**

My 1200 Bandit (pre-2000) never burned oil between changes. None. It is a pretty common fact on the Bandit 12 lists that the post-2000 models, which changed piston design, have had numerous cases of severe oil consumption. Many dealers will replace the pistons. It is a real situation and real problem. Three-quarters of a quart in 1200 miles is serious consumption, despite your claim otherwise. Try touring the U.S. when you have to add almost a quart every other day. That is purely ridiculous. My last long trip was 400-700 miles a day. At that rate I would have had to find three quarts of Red-line 20-50 in a week. Hard to do in New Mexico and Arizona. (Or I could have carried it along on an R6). I did not add any oil on the 3000-mile trip.

If I had a bike that burned that much oil I would get rid of it or fix it. I have not owned a bike that burned that much oil, including three Nortons which I nicknamed "oilslingers." The Ducati Diana 250, Yamaha FJ1100, Kawasaki EX250, the three NT650 Hawks, the CBR F1 and F2, the several Nortons, the Yamaha R6, and the SV 650 have all pretty much not burned oil.

Ernest Montague II  
afm199@earthlink.net

**Standard Oil Consumption Clarified**

Your comparison tests have led me to two ST1100s, a K1200LT and now the FJR1300. However, your reply to two questions about oil usage in the latest Downtime Files has me wondering where you are getting your information. You state that the industry standard for oil consumption is one quart per 1000 miles, yet I have never had a motorcycle or car use that much oil. My two ST1100s and my K1200LT have never needed any oil between recommended oil change intervals and are still at the top of the sight glass when it is time for a change. My 1983 Yamaha Venture, with 134,000 miles, only uses a quart about every 3000 miles, just as it did when new. Have I been really lucky with my motorcycles?

Arnold Faber  
via Internet

*The figures that we use for allowable consumption of oil come from the manufacturers of the machines. The numbers represent the maximum amount of oil that can be consumed and the machine still be considered to be within normal limits. This oil consumption amount is only exceeded when something is seriously wrong, such as bad rings, valve guides, etc. It is not uncommon to find machines that consume almost no oil at all, but that is not the intent of the specification. The amount of mileage you have accumulated on your machine, without*

*an oil consumption problem, indicates to us that you have been very diligent with your oil changes, making sure that you have always kept clean oil in your system.*

**Possible ZRX Defect**

I wanted to respond to what Jeffery had to say about his plug wires in the April 2003 Downtime Files:

I have a '99 ZRX1100 that I bought new in April '99. At that time I began what eventually turned into the ZRX Owners' Association. At over 4000 members strong, we have an excellent collective for solving ZRX related problems.

One thing many ZRXOA members, including myself, have found, is that Kawasaki has a problem with the plug wires. They pull out of the boots very easily and are not put together very well. Most of the time, if you do happen to pull a wire out of the boot, you will see that there is not much bare wire touching the prong inside the boot. It is really a wonder the bikes run at all!

Don't get me wrong. I love my ZRX, as do the other ZRXOA members. However, this is a common problem with the ZRX, whether it be the older 1100 or newer 1200 models.

Tell Dan and Jeffery to stop by [www.zrxoa.org](http://www.zrxoa.org) and check us out. We might have more answers for other concerns!

Brent Hobson  
ZRXOA#1  
zrxoa@yahoo.com

**Drive Chain Wear Tolerance**

I have a Triumph Trophy 1200 with a Regina 136 ORP endless chain. Adjustments are not the problem but when is the chain "stretched" out of tolerance? If I take a caliper to measure, what formula do I use?

Triumph Tony  
tony4393@home.com

*The traditional way to check for chain "stretch" (wear) is to grasp the chain at the rear center of the driven sprocket, and pull rearward. The greater the chain wear, the more tooth will be exposed under the chain link. If you can expose more than half the height of a sprocket tooth, it's time to replace the chain and sprockets. (Some chain manufacturers would even say that one-third the height of the tooth showing is grounds to replace the chain.)*

*Another frequent problem with chains is uneven wear. The chain slack may be tighter in one spot, and looser in another, as you rotate the rear wheel off the ground. If you find this situation, remember that chain slack is always adjusted with the chain in its tightest position. Also, if this condition is pronounced and you see more*

*than an inch difference in vertical "slack" halfway between the sprockets, it's time to replace the whole shebang, including the front sprocket.*

*When replacing chain and sprockets, one trick is to obtain sprockets with an odd number of teeth (17, 43 not 16, 42) That way, the chain links contact different teeth rather than constantly the same ones.*

**How Do Battery Eliminators Work?**

I have a question regarding the use of battery eliminators. Other than the obvious drawbacks of not having a battery, are there any risks to the bike's electrical system by using such a device? How do they work?

I've seen "universal" battery eliminators advertised that are claimed to work on a multitude of different makes and models. Is this a true claim, or does the eliminator device need to be carefully matched to the output of the particular bike's electrical system, or to the type and size of battery being replaced?

The battery in my (kickstart only) 1980 Yamaha SR500 died last fall, and I'd really like to avoid purchasing another battery if I can, but I don't want to risk damage to my bike.

Jim Nelson  
jnelson@mscon.com  
Nephi, UT

*Battery eliminators are fine in any kick-start-only machine that uses an AC generator (as opposed to an ac alternator), since the permanent magnet in the generator will produce enough voltage and current to run your lights and other electrical devices. However, you may find that you have to raise your idle speed slightly so that when you are stopped with your brakelights on, the ignition system has sufficient voltage and current.*

*Rather than harming your bike, the eliminator should remove most of the voltage spikes that would otherwise shorten your lamp's life.*

**Frankensaki ZL900**

I have a question that I am having difficulty finding an answer to. Don't ask me why, maybe the answer is, "because it can be done," but I have gotten deeper and deeper into customizing a 1986 Kawasaki ZL-900.

I am contemplating swapping out the rear wheel of this shaft-drive project from the 15" stock wheel to a larger wheel with a lower profile radial tire. (I've already swapped out the front end with an '89 Kawasaki ZX-10.)

I have hounded my local Kawasaki dealer, looking at all the exploded parts drawings, and it "appears" that a rear wheel

from a new Meanstreak is very, very similar. Do you know if the internals will link up between the ZL (old Vulcan) drive components and the Meanstreak wheel? I can figure the external dimensions myself.

Clyde Caceres  
reddotking@yahoo.com  
Portland, OR

*We know of no reliable resources for this kind of information. When we want to build a 'Frankenbike,' we gather the parts and then try to get things to play. Of course, this is not something that can, or should be done casually, because when you are done, you have to ride the thing, and all kinds of serious problems can occur if your engineering wasn't well done.*

*Perhaps the readers can turn us all on to the kind of engineering information you seek. Good luck with your project.*

**Superior Exhaust Can Packing**

This is off the Hawklist. Thought it might be useful information for your Files when the next time comes around to repack your exhaust canister.

Bob Nagel  
redhawk89@mindspring.com

I tried fiberglass in the Yosh slip-ons on my '86 VFR for five or six seasons and had to repack every year. Then I discovered "SUPERWOOL 607." It is an industrial insulation for hi-temp applications such as turbocharger blankets on large gas compressors (2000+ hp). It is also used to wrap steel pipe prior to stress-relieving weld joints. It is a "Refractory Ceramic Fiber product" made from "Crystalline silica formed at over 1800° F," according to the manufacturer. It comes in a bulk blanket form, about 1.25" thick, which I cut to size easily with ordinary household scissors.

This stuff does not burn out—period. I have a small plastic grocery bag full and have only repacked the old VFR mufflers twice in eight years; once the first time and once when I had the pipes disassembled for nickel plating and polishing. Even then, the packing was in great shape physically, just dirty is all.

If you can contact some industrial (oil field) insulators or (pipe) stress relievers locally, they should have it in stock. If not, here is the manufacturer's information: Thermal Ceramics, Augusta, GA, at 800-722-5681.

They will probably give you a line about it not being meant for this application. Well, they are right, it isn't. In fact, it is far superior to anything you will ever find.

That being said, SUPERWOOL 607 will be the last packing you will buy. Period. It works for me. And No, I cannot get you any. I had to ask someone nicely for my tiny

stash and I expect it to last at least 20 years or more at the rate it's going!

Hope this helps.  
Rob McKinnon

**"Silicate-Free" Requirements**

Is it really necessary to use a "silicate free" antifreeze mixture in my '98 Honda Shadow VT1100 Tourer for maximum water pump life? I bought the bike used (16K mi) and the original owner has been using regular Prestone (w/silicate) antifreeze mixture. So far, there's no leakage problems at the pump. Please advise.

Utah Chuck  
Schndcaj@wmconnect.com  
St. George, UT

*Yes, you need to use the proper antifreeze. The problem is that silicate is an insoluble metal salt that can destroy the bearings in the water pump. Other types of antifreeze build up deposits in the cooling passages, and several types attack the aluminum over time. Take the factory's word for what you should use.*

**Fuel Brand Considerations**

In the response to "Clearing the Fog," the topic of fuel (brand) preference was omitted.

My Nissan Maxima was experiencing gummed fuel injectors that failed electrically as a result. After replacing four of them within a year and a half, the Nissan service manager asked me about my fuel selection. The SE had always been fed premium in accordance with the manual, but I had never restricted usage to any particular brand.

The service manager's recommendation: Stick to either Texaco or Chevron, because their additive specs are higher quality, resulting in fewer deposits, and that their vendors sell only the respective company's own product. She elaborated that some other supposed "brand names"—like the no-names—actually buy their gas from an assortment of wholesale suppliers without any particular control specs over refinery source or additive blend. You "could" be getting a high quality tankful on occasion, but there is no guarantee of consistency.

I took the advice, and now am going on five years without any additional problems. While my H-D's fuel range does not permit me the luxury of being quite so picky during long rides on country roads, the injectors aren't as difficult to access for replacement, either. It hasn't yet become necessary, in any case.

Additional research is required, though. Most of the Texaco retailers in my area have now become Shell stations, and I have no idea whether they follow the same business

model as the service manager stated for Texaco and Chevron. I would welcome any relevant data; I have lost track of my source, and in fact never saw any documentation supporting the recommendation. But the anecdotal evidence has been sufficient for me thus far.

Eric White  
midorado@drizzle.com  
Bellevue, WA

**Shadow Giving The Slip**

I have a 1998 Honda Shadow Ace 1100. At any speed and in any gear, if I give it throttle hard and quick, the motor revs but I gain speed very slowly. If I back off and roll on slowly, no problem, and I gain speed quickly as the throttle is opened.

The clutch cable is correctly adjusted at the grip. Highway speeds, same trouble. Bike has 36K on it. Is this normal? Am I hitting the rev limiter? Or is my clutch just slipping from sudden increase of power?

Thanks.  
Leland Byrd  
lelandbyrd@aol.com

*Your thought that it may be a slipping clutch seems to be spot on. Since the engine is coming up to speed normally, the power must be getting lost between the primary drive and the transmission input shaft, and that would be the clutch.*



**Downtime Files**

is a joint service of  
Motorcycle Consumer News  
and the American Motorcycle Institute  
of Daytona Beach, Florida.

Please keep in mind that since the AMI staff has not seen your motorcycle, the answers given are best-guess assumptions based on prior experience and education, and may not necessarily be correct. When in doubt, take your motorcycle to a qualified shop.

Send your typewritten questions and photos if possible to:

**MCN Downtime Files**  
P.O. Box 6050  
Mission Viejo, CA 92690

Send e-mail questions (with any attached images in jpeg format) to:

**editor@mcnews.com**  
**Subject Line: Downtime Files**