

This email was written May 19, 2011 in response to a rider being told to dismount before filling his tank at Shell. I have removed some names.

Dear -----

Let me begin by saying how lucky you are to be able to ride on the Vancouver Island, beautiful surroundings and much nicer weather and a longer riding season than I can enjoy in Calgary.

Responses to questions is normally directed through the same customer service group that you sent your question to. In this case, I am also an avid rider with more than three decades of riding so I thought I would respond directly to your inquiry.

While the station attendant was correct in requesting that you dismount your motorcycle before fuelling, his explanation of the reason for this was not entirely complete.

The reasons for asking riders to get off their bikes:

This reduces the riders exposure to breathing gasoline vapors by increasing the distance from the fill point

This reduces the possibility of the riders skin and clothing being exposed to fuel splash and overflows if they occur

Should a refueling fire start, the rider's ability to quickly separate themselves from the fire is improved if they are already off the motorcycle

If a fire forced the rider to jump off the bike, the risk of the motorcycle falling over and spreading the fire is greatly reduced

As you can well imagine, Shell being a global company also operates in many countries where motorcycles are used as the primary mode of motorized transport. This allows us to review incidents all over the world and apply best practices developed in other countries that may have more experience in a particular area. In this case the policy came about as a result of investigations into multiple incidents that were compounded by the individual remaining on the motorcycle while fuelling. In most cases the damages were relatively minor and related to fuel spills and tank overfills resulting in the customer who was straddling the motorcycle being splashed with gasoline. In more severe cases the fuel splash has reached hot engine parts resulting in fires and in a tragic case, the resulting fires caused fatalities when the rider jumped off the bike knocking it over with it's still open fuel tank and the resulting fuel splash exposed the rider, as well as other individuals in the vicinity with burning gasoline.

There is currently no provincial or national regulation requiring riders to dismount prior to fuelling, but Shell believes it is our corporate responsibility to ensure that we create as safe an environment as possible at our stations. We have not widely communicated to the motorcycling community our global policy, partially because we are not aware of any other major oil company in Canada adopting a similar policy. We do not wish to create the mistaken impression that Shell is not motorcycle friendly because of this policy. Our motorcycling community in Canada still remains relatively small, so we have tried to manage this policy by asking station staff to reinforce this policy with customers in a respectful manner. We do have a pamphlet available at all our locations called "Shell Helps with Gasoline Safety" that does mention this subject. I have attached a PDF version for your convenience.

I hope you find this explanation adequate and that you consider how Shell is doing this to improve rider safety when you make your choice of fuel supplier. I do understand the difficulties in topping up a fuel tank while the bike is on the side stand, but from a technical standpoint the tank should not be filled beyond 95% capacity to allow for expansion and the design of a modern Harley fuel tank is such that this limit should be able to be reached even when the motorcycle is on the side stand. Since I see you are a HOG member, I did not bother to suggest the center stand as an alternative, but this could be suggested to owners of lighter motorcycles equipped with center stands.

Thank you for your inquiry,

Mike

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