

*** STAYING COOL ***
by Dave Hough

Many of you know DAVE HOUGH through his books and seminars. Recently I asked Dave for some hints on staying cool during VERY hot weather. Check out the advice he sent me:

As ambient air temperature rises to body temperature, you can't give off heat to the air--you can only absorb more heat. And that "ambient" temperature includes whatever the results of engine heat. It's not unusual for air temps in the radiator outlets to be well above 100F.

So, if air temp around you is much less than body temp (say below 80F) you can wear vented (or even mesh) gear and the air passing through will absorb heat from your body. But if the temp is above 98F, you need to insulate your body to prevent any additional heat absorption.

The only ways I know to get rid of body heat are evaporative cooling and ice. And the most effective location to give off heat is the carotid arteries between neck and ears, because that's an area of blood flow that's near the surface and major volume. Yes, you need to keep the old internal "battery" topped up with water, but I'm talking about applying water externally to the surface. And, BTW, if you're peeing, you're hydrated. If you're not peeing regularly, you're getting dehydrated, and that leads to heat cramps, then worse. Drink plain water, not caffeine, sugar, or chemicals.

I wear either an Aerostich "Evapodanna" or a knit neck "warmer", either soaked in water. Even hot air rushing over wet fabric causes evaporation that actually cools down the surface. Your blood gives off heat to the skin, which gives off heat to the evaporating water.

Looks really crazy, but it works. The trick is to keep that neck cooler wet. And it's pretty amazing to pull a bottle of water out of a hot tank bag every few minutes and dump it on the neck cooler. For about four seconds it feels like the hot water that it is, then suddenly it chills from evaporation, and you can feel the temperature drop. It's not as effective in a very humid climate, but it works. And in the desert it really works.

When it's REALLY hot, I stop frequently at a fast food joint, fill a water bladder with crushed ice, and stash it in my Aerostich breast pocket. The ice absorbs heat to melt. To me, "really" hot is above 100F. Takes a lot of ice, of course, and you feel funny walking into a hot place wearing heavy gear, while everyone else is in shorts and sandals. I figure, let 'em wonder.

There are also some "cooling vests" and neck "snakes" containing some crystal that absorbs water. My experience is that the crystals can't give off water fast enough to keep up with evaporation, and a vest inside your jacket isn't out where the evaporation really works. But you might want to try the Motorsport Cooling Vest from Whitehorse Gear.