

News Update

Chris Hyatt
Peachtree City, Georgia



Motor officer evaluation of the Victory Police Motorcycle after having it deployed and then attending Victory Police Motor Officer training in Arizona in the two week instructor course!

It has been a year since my last report on the “advertised” benefits of policing on the Victory Commander I. That report was written after demoing the motorcycles for one day and in return pleading my case to my department heads as well as our city council on what I felt was the best option for our department. Fortunately, my opinion was upheld and my Chief agreed that the Victory was indeed our best option. Several months passed and we succeeded in convincing our city council to not only continue with our Motors program (they were debating cutting it completely after our Harley lease expired), but to endorse the purchasing of the Victory Commander I. A short period later and I took delivery of our very own Victory Commander I from Mike himself.

I have now been riding the Victory on duty for seven months now and it has far exceeded my expectations. The response from the general public is remarkable. Everybody has to stop and ask about the motorcycle; I have never seen any other motorcycle draw a crowd like my Victory does. Even the Die-Hard-Harley guys are starting to come around once they hear my reasons for switching. All of the highlights I remarked on in my previous write up have been put through the wringer and I must say they all hold true as advertised.

The sheer comfort of this motorcycle is one of the first qualities an officer realizes after the first full shift on it. The very first time the motor was used at work was in our city’s 4th of July parade. The police motorcycle has led this parade for the previous two years while we had our Harley-Davidson Road King. The parade is conducted at a walking pace and the Harley would begin to overheat after the first ½ mile of the parade. At times I would even have visible smoke coming from the sides of the engine and the motor would begin to stall out. I would eventually have to pull out of the parade on side streets and run it up to highway speeds just to get it to stop smoking. This was not the case at all with the Victory. The Victory performed just as good at the beginning of the parade as it did at the end, and this is an event that typically lasts for 2-3 hours at a WALKING speed. Not once did the bike show any signs of overheating, and surprisingly I did not have any discomfort in the saddle from engine heat either. That is just one example of the comfort experienced on this motorcycle. The overall riding position this bike provides alleviates all back problems and saddle sore issues. I can tell you I have personally put over 600 miles on this bike in a single day without any discomfort at all. I could have easily gone another 600, if I was allowed to. I can also say I have ridden in conditions ranging from 100+ degrees down to below freezing temperatures and no motorcycle has made it easier to do than the Victory Commander I. If you anticipate any type of cold weather than I strongly suggest investing in the heated grips and the heated saddle. I have never heard of a police motorcycle with a heated saddle, but after riding on one I’m not sure how I survived without it. I am more comfortable on this bike at 20 degrees than I was on my Road King in the high 40’s, I kid you not. Another small comfort feature that many overlook is the simple pleasure of having a radio on the motorcycle. Anybody that is expected to spend 8-10 hours on a motorcycle will tell you immediately that something as small as the ability to listen to music makes the day that much more enjoyable. I firmly believe if you’re actually enjoying your time on the road at work, it will show in your quality of work conducted. The last thing I’ll say about comfort is how all of the controls are setup. Victory clearly put some time and effort into deciding what goes where on the bike. My department’s bike has every electronic gadget you could possibly fit on a motorcycle like a camera, radar, police radio, emergency lights, and siren along with the features of the Victory itself like the cruise control, radio controls, and all of the digital switches. With that being said, there is not one single button I can’t function while keeping both my hands on the handlebars. That goes a long way in regards to officer safety and comfort.

Another key aspect in purchasing our Victory was in the way the electrical components of the motorcycle were set up. Our biggest problem with our Road King was that the motorcycle was constantly dying while on duty and I had to roll start it sometimes or even get it towed back to the police department. Victory was very adamant that they put a lot of thought and time into designing their electrical system. After utilizing my Victory on the road for seven months I can

News Update

Chris Hyatt

Peachtree City, Georgia



confirm that their thoughts and efforts are easily noticeable. All of the electronics on our motorcycle, and as I mentioned earlier we got 'em all, are wired into a single wiring harness and run off of an auxiliary battery in the top box. Just looking at the difference between the Victory and our Road King in regards to the wiring is night and day. My Road King was a wiring mess with wires running all over the bike and it was covered with twist ties everywhere. It basically looked like each individual electronic component was added one at a time on separate days of each other by different technicians. The Victory is very clean to look at. Most of the wires are ran through the frame and completely out of sight. It simply looks like somebody actually took their time and had a little bit of pride in the work they were doing when wiring up my Victory. In regards to the performance, I have had absolutely no electrical problems with this motorcycle. There is even a port in the top box that allows me to plug an extension cord in it at night if I feel I may have ran my top box battery a little harder than usual. However, now Victory is installing voltmeters on their motorcycles that monitor the charge of the top box battery so there is no question if you need to plug your bike up or not. While working the road I have learned that if you are going to be on a scene for a while like a bad wreck or a DUI stop, simply leave your bike idling in neutral. The beauty of this system is that it actually recharges itself at an idle and does not overheat. I have worked a scene for several hours with my motorcycle idling on the side of the road with all of its equipment running and when I went to pull out it was like I had only been off the bike for a moment.

The cost of the motorcycle was one of the other aspects I focused in when pitching the idea to my department. I'm going to be honest; the first thing one must overcome when trying to pitch the Victory to their department is to not be sticker shocked. Yes, at first glance the Victory seems very expensive when compared to other police motorcycles. What you have to realize is that the price they are giving you is all-inclusive, it will never change and you do not need to buy anything else for your motorcycle once you order it. This includes everything from the top box, the lights, the siren, the skid plates, and every single feature you order on your motorcycle. Once you order the Victory it gets delivered to your front door and the moment it rolls off the trailer you simply turn the key and you are 10-8 in service. The striping's already done, your departments logos are already on it, and everything is ready to go. Another important thing to focus on during your pitch is the total cost of maintenance on these motorcycles. I will be up front with you, over the seven months I have had my Victory it has undergone its break in service at 1000 miles and another service when I passed 5000 miles. Both of these services cost me \$50 and I picked up a box with all the oil and filters I needed to perform the service. The technician at our cities shop conducted both of them himself in a very short period of time. So basically the two services my bike has required since I took possession of it cost my department \$100 total. The cheapest single service I ever had on my Road King was over \$300. These savings are only expounded upon when you look into the costs of replacing brake pads and even clutches should you find yourself actually ever needing a new one. The fact is simply the more bikes in your fleet the more money you save in regards to servicing them. Another to keep in mind is that you are also getting a five year warranty on the entire motorcycle and ALL of its components you ordered through VPM. I still haven't been able to find anybody else that would even come close to offering me that one.

That leads me into my next point of discussion, officer safety. The representatives from Victory preached hard and heavy on how their goal was to build the "safest" police motorcycle on the market. After spending several months on this motorcycle I can confidently say that they succeeded. There are so many features to this bike that keep the officer safer from injury during all aspects of operation. The first big thing they point out to you is their "Tip-Over Protection." I speak first hand when I tell you that it is next to impossible to injure yourself at slow speeds on this motorcycle. I have personally dropped and witnessed this bike being dropped well over hundreds of times in training scenarios ranging from cone patterns to off road riding. As long as the officer keeps his feet on the floor boards the bike simply comes to a rest gently on the skid plates. I have been to motor schools where students are riding Harleys, Hondas, Kawi's, and BMW's and I can tell you I have seen students sustain many injuries from very minor drops and falls on these other motorcycles. One of the biggest injuries that leads to an officer missing work is an ankle or leg injury sustained by either the bike coming onto the leg or the ankle being pinched in the floor boards. The skid plates and overall design of the Victory make that next to impossible. Those same skid plates also prevent a lot of damage being sustained by the

News Update

Chris Hyatt

Peachtree City, Georgia



motorcycle during training and road riding. I have taken my Victory off road, over curbs, and even up and down several flights of stairs. Each time I could hear the undercarriage of the motorcycle smash into the concrete underneath and not one time did it do anything to the motorcycle; there are barely even signs of scrapes to the plates. I can also attest that these features are exemplified in the overall construction of the motorcycle itself. The bike not only protects riders from injury in slow speed drops but also in more average speed collisions. I have seen firsthand the damage a Victory Commander I sustained when it collided into the rear of a Lexus SUV while responding to an emergency. I was amazed to learn the Lexus was declared a total loss due to frame damage, because the motorcycle I was looking at had slightly bent front forks, a broken windscreen, and the metal trim around the front fender was bent backwards. I was even more amazed to find out that I rode this very same bike during Victory's motor school several months later. The overall performance of the Victory adds that since of officer safety. I have never ridden another motorcycle that felt so smooth and effective when it came to emergency braking. I'm not going to sit here and say that this bike stops quicker and shorter than any bike out there, but I will say that it tends to be the most consistent. I say this because I have learned through training opportunities that this bike will stop just as quick and short on its twentieth consecutive attempt as it did on its first attempt. I'm not a mechanic so I can't say how they do it but I have never had a motorcycle consistently stop generally with the same consistency when put through repetitive trials. My previous bike would perform substantially worse after only a few consecutive attempts. It is hard to describe how safe an officer feels while riding this motorcycle without allowing them to experience it for themselves. Maybe it has to do with its handling, or its well balanced and very low center of gravity, or even just in the size and encompassing feeling of being in the motorcycle. Whatever it is I can undoubtedly say that I have never felt safer on any motorcycle than I do riding my Victory Commander I. It has gotten to the point where I have begun figuring out how to sell my two personal bikes in an attempt to obtain a Victory for my own personal use. Trust me, after you ride one of these at work all day the last thing you want to do is go home and ride any other kind of motorcycle because it only disappoints you.

The last thing I am going to talk about is the training offered by Victory Police Motorcycles. I recently had the privilege to obtain my Police Motorcycle Instructor certification through VPM's police motorcycle training program. I flew out to Tucson with my department's newly appointed police motorcycle officer who was going to hopefully obtain his basic certification as I gained my Instructor certification. The course surprised me from the very beginning. While ironing out the logistics of the trip I was shocked to hear that both my fellow officer and I did not need to acquire a rental car or any other means of transportation from the airport to the hotel. We landed in Tucson late Sunday night and were picked up personally by Mike Schultz. He took us to our hotel accommodations that evening and picked us up the following morning and took us to the training site. From that point on we were given our very own Victory Commander I to utilize for the entire two weeks course. This included the use for our own personal needs for transportation after the class ended each day. Basically, from the first day of class to the last day we checked out of our hotel we were able to ride our motorcycles everywhere instead of needing to spend hundreds of dollars on a rental car. When I asked Mike and our instructor JP McArdle about why they allow and trust the students with this huge responsibility, their response was that their job was to train the highest quality of police motorcyclists possible and what better way to do that then keep them on a motorcycle at all times, day or night. The differences between this course and the others I have witnessed and attended were vastly obvious. JP amazed me with his very personal and positive approach to teaching the skills needed for this high risk job. It was obvious from the beginning that he truly cared about the success of his students. I have attended other motor schools where it was obvious the instructors cared more about maintaining their high wash-out rate instead of turning out the highest quality of officers possible. I watched first hand as a student who seemed to struggle even more so than I initially did during my basic course, successfully negotiate the slow cone weave, offset weave, and the intersection cone patterns at least one time by Day 3 of the 1st week. This is rarely seen by the end of the entire first week. VPM instructors were exceptional in noticing what errors a student tends to repeat and is able to remedy these bad habits while all the while maintaining the students confidence and since of accomplishment. I never once saw them say or do anything that would make a student feel as though he was frustrated or disappointed with their performance. I can now officially say that after witnessing two weeks of this style of teaching that the results are

News Update

Chris Hyatt
Peachtree City, Georgia



exponentially greater than anything gained from any other style of learning environment. In regards to the actual course itself and the curriculum it covers, all I can say is WOW! I have never seen a motor school that included so much road riding. 99% of all motor schools I have seen are conducted in a parking lot filled with cones. Victory's course was probably 50% slow skills work in a parking lot and 50% road riding skills. This is crucial because the entirety of an officer's career is spent on the road not in a parking lot. The skills developed in the numerous road rides ranged from pair riding, to surface assessments, to negotiating traffic, and was conducted in all types of weather conditions. We rode on side streets, highways, and even interstates. What other schools would have you riding through sand, dirt, gravel, and even snow one day, then up and down flights of stairs the next on a 1000+lb motorcycle? JP was great at making it feel less like work because while you are working on acquiring and sharpening these crucial skills, you are doing so while riding through some of the most beautiful scenery I have ever ridden in my life. You get to ride up Mt. Lemmon (9000+ft) and through deserts and alpine country. Some days you will ride over 500 miles; in fact during the entire course I attended I believe we logged over 1700-1800 miles. Folks back at home will never believe that you are actually training and will do their best to make you feel like you were simply "joy-riding" in Arizona for two weeks. Only those lucky enough to attend this course will truly know and appreciate the quality of training you actually do receive during this course. I will say this; I left my new motor officer expecting to get him certified then come back home and put him through at least 3 weeks of an MTO or FTO period with me until I knew he was ready for enforcement riding. However, since I was able to witness the training he endured during the Victory two week course I can honestly say that the gap between motor school and a student's field training period back home has been greatly reduced if not nullified. I would have had no problem allowing my new officer to work the road on his own the day we landed back home because I knew he learned all the road riding skills needed to be safe on the job during his "basic" training. Trust me there is no better training out there for Police Motorcycle Officers. I would strongly encourage even those not fortunate enough to ride Victory's at work to consider sending their new recruits through Victory's Basic Motor Officer School just because of the high quality of officer's they produce from this program.

Chris Hyatt
Peachtree City Police Dept.
350 Highway 74 S.
Peachtree, GA 30269
(678) 777-1362
chyatt@peachtree-city.org