

News For Thought



Georgia Turns Speeders into Fuel Pumps

It's a ridiculous concept, reports the National Motorists Association (NMA), but somehow it seemed inevitable. Check out this story from USA Today: The surging price of gasoline has come to this: a "fuel surcharge" on your next speeding ticket.

Drivers caught speeding in the north Atlanta suburb of Holly Springs soon will have to pay an extra \$12 -- to cover \$4-a-gallon gas costs for the police officers who stop them.

Is your police cruiser running low on fuel? No problem, just pull over someone driving home from work, ticket them, and you'll have a full tank of gas in no time.

Need to balance your budget? Maybe you should look to Pizza Hut for inspiration: Police Chief Ken Ball says he was seeking ways to maintain patrols despite record high gas prices. "I was hearing that Delta (Air Lines), pizza deliverers, florists were adding fuel charges to their services, and I thought, why not police departments?" he says.

Unfortunately it looks like this isn't going to be an isolated case. As with any situation where money is available to be taken from citizens, local government is on the case immediately: Ball says he's being "inundated" by calls from police chiefs and city managers. "I've heard from at least a dozen police chiefs and half a dozen city managers," he says of their municipality's recently-passed measure. "They want to know how we did it, and could we send them a copy of the ordinance." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Pat Corcoran, spokesman for ABATE of Maryland, said "Most motorcycle accidents involving another vehicle, are almost always the fault of the other vehicle, and usually the comment of the other driver is, we just didn't see him."

The law also allows the use of blue-dot tail lights, which also increases conspicuity in traffic. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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Weird News: Dirty Deeds

More than 600 emergency workers participated in a mock disaster drill simulating an attack on Long Island by a fake biker gang detonating a "dirty bomb" at a federal courthouse, testing the abilities of authorities to handle such a radioactive attack.

Police, firefighters, medical workers and other personnel from 60 agencies converged on the fire academy in Yaphank, NY, which also involved 10 area hospitals.

The exercise was dubbed "S.C.R.U.B." or "Suffolk County Response to an Unknown Bomb," and the scenario involved a local biker gang called "El Diablo," which would attack the courthouse with a deadly dirty bomb after federal officials arrested their leaders.

More than 100 people were injured or killed in the fake attack, and the injured had to be cleansed and decontaminated before they were actually sent to local hospitals for treatment. Police had to determine the cause of the blast. Other participants practiced decontamination, detecting radiation exposure and coordinating responses with multiple agencies.

Authorities called it the largest emergency drill in Suffolk County's history. It was funded by the Suffolk County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency services with a \$ 175,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

EU Motorcycles to Get Onboard Warning Systems

Motorcycles will get new onboard warning systems to tell the rider when he's going too fast under proposals unveiled recently at a motorcycle safety conference in Brussels, Belgium. The technology will tell the rider when he's going into a bend too fast or exceeding the speed limit. A "frontal collision warning" system will detect when the bike is too close to an obstacle.

On-road trials of the In-Vehicle Information System technology will begin by 2010 under the European Commission's plans, which are backed by the Federation of European Motorcyclists Associations (FEMA).

The project, called SAFERIDER, "aims to develop devices to improve the comfort and safety of riders through technology such as warning devices to alert the rider of a potential crash or provide information about black (blind) spots or traffic design," according to a FEMA press release, adding that "The decision by FEMA to participate in the SAFERIDER project is because we need to find out if technology can assist a rider to make decisions to avoid collisions or crashes. We need to ensure that the technology being developed can benefit riders - but if doesn't, then we need to be in a position to make our point of view clear."

More information on the SAFERIDER project can be found at www.saferider-eu.org. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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States Green-Light New Red-Light Laws for Motorcycles

Motorcyclists in a growing number of states are being allowed to go through red lights when sensors aren't able to detect they are there.

In May, South Carolina became the seventh state to give motorcyclists license to

proceed with caution after stopping when the device that causes the light to change from red to green doesn't activate, according to a recent article in USA Today.

North Carolina passed a similar law in 2007. Wisconsin (2006), Idaho (2006) Arkansas (2005), Tennessee (2003) and Minnesota (2002), all have passed laws the past six years, while similar legislation has been introduced in Georgia, Missouri and Oklahoma.

The traffic lights in question are controlled by devices buried under the road that operate similar to metal detectors, according to Doug Hecox, a spokesman for the Federal Highway Administration. Their sensitivity can be set to detect motorcycles, but the proper balance is difficult to adjust, he said.

California has chosen a technological solution. A law adopted last year requires that when new traffic-activated signals are installed, they be capable of detecting motorcycles and bicycles.

"In Texas, we took a different approach," said Sputnik, President of the Texas Motorcycle Rights Association (TMRA-II) and Chairman of the National Coalition of Motorcyclists' Legislative Task Force (NCOM-LTF). He told a gathering at the recent NCOM Convention in Houston about a law passed there last year: "When a traffic light doesn't detect motorcycles, they have to fix them so they do." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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Maryland Riders Light It Up

Motorcycle riders in Maryland hope to get more attention from car drivers with a new state law that allows the use of specified auxiliary lighting, which can only be used after dark, thus increasing their visibility to other road users at night.

Senate Bill 1713, the "Night-time Awareness - Auxiliary

Lighting" bill, passed unanimously through the House and Senate, and was signed into law April 8th by Governor Martin O'Malley.

The new law, which went into effect June 1st, addresses the use of LED lights that illuminate the sides of the motorcycle, thus allowing other drivers to see motorcyclists from the side as well as front and rear. The lights cannot be blue or red and cannot blink, flash or oscillate. They can only be directed toward the engine and drive train and are specifically prohibited from being on wheels.

Quotable Quote: "These are days when many are discouraged. In the 93 years of my life, depressions have come and gone. Prosperity has always returned and will again." John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937), American industrialist