

News For Thought

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EPA Officially Approves E15 For Sale In The U.S.

Putting E15 (a mixture of 15% ethanol and 85% gasoline) on sale in the U.S. has been all but official since April, when the Environmental Protection Agency approved the first applications to make E15. Now, "all but official" has become official, with the EPA giving approval for retailers to start selling the controversial bio-fuel, which many claim can damage smaller engines such as motorcycles and ATVs and void manufacturers' warranties. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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Congress Passes Federal Highway Bill

The Highway Bill, HR 4348: MAP-21, has cleared both chambers of Congress and is expected to be signed into law soon by President Obama. The 600-page \$120 billion federal funding measure reauthorizes funds for transportation projects through 2014, and extends

the motorcycle safety grant program to the states amounting to a percentage of each state's federal safety dollars that must be spent on rider education and awareness campaigns.

Despite considerable lobbying by motorcyclists, language from HR 904 to block funding of motorcycle-only checkpoints was not included in the final passage due to technical germaneness issues, but on the flipside no provisions were adopted in the bill that would negatively impact motorcycling. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

NY Bill Would Require Motorcycle Safety Education For New Riders

A New York bill that would improve motorcycle safety by including awareness training in the state Department of Motor Vehicles required courses passed unanimously in the Senate on June 4.

S.7138 would amend the Vehicle and Traffic Law to create a two-hour motorcycle safety and awareness component to the DMV's mandatory five-hour pre-licensing course for new drivers. Specific requirements would be set by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles.

"This is just one more step towards making our highways safer for both motorcyclists and those traveling on four wheels," said state Senator Patricia A. Ritchie (R-Heuvelton) who cosponsored the bipartisan measure along with Sen. Kevin Parker (D-Brooklyn). "By teaching people how to properly share the road, we can cut down on accidents and help save lives."

Now Senator Ritchie is looking for a sponsor to introduce the legislation in the general Assembly.

Rhode Island Riders Get Designated Parking

A new Rhode Island law will require all state and municipal buildings to provide designated parking spaces for motorcycles from April to November. The legislation, sponsored by Senator John J. Tassoni Jr. (D-Smithfield) and State

Representative Peter John Petrarca (D-Lincoln), was recently approved by the General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Lincoln D. Chafee (I).

The legislation dictates that city and town officials create parking plans by this November for parking areas at municipal buildings and mandates that the new parking spaces, marked by appropriate signage, be made available by April 1, 2013. All state, city, or town buildings must establish a motorcycle parking plan by November, with the number and placement of the motorcycle parking spaces varying by building, and to be determined by the number of employees who use motorcycles. The law does not apply to state airport parking lots. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Novelty Helmets Outlawed In Canada

A new provincial law announced by the Ministry of Justice requires motorcyclists in British Columbia to wear helmets that show proper industry certification, such as Snell or a U.S. Dept. of Transportation sticker.

The law takes effect in July on Canada Day, and until now motorcyclists could

wear anything that was sold as a motorcycle helmet, including so-called "novelty" models that are smaller, lighter and lack protective inner padding. "Many members of biker gangs and their followers wore such helmets," noted the Maple Ridge News in announcing the policy change.

"A lot of the Hells Angels guys...they will wear the fake helmets, as well," RCMP Constable Tom Sparks told the newspaper. Once the helmet law is enforced, \$138 tickets will be handed out. In addition to a ticket, riders also will be required to park their bike if they're caught using an illegal helmet. "You cannot continue."

Sgt. Dale Somerville added that police aren't targeting any particular segment of riders, but if there's a group that uses non-legal helmets more often, they'll get stopped more often.

European Union Proposes Motorcycle Safety Instructions

The European Commission proposes to include all types of powered two wheelers into a regulation on periodic roadworthiness tests and calls for annual inspection intervals for all vehicles more than six years old, according to the Federation of European Motorcyclists' Associations (FEMA). The measure would cost riders over 1.2 Billion Euros extra per year, with no clear benefits for anyone, says FEMA in criticizing the proposal as unnecessary and ineffective and calls for its withdrawal.

On Friday, July 13th, the European Commission published a proposal for a "Regulation on periodic roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers". In comparison to the previous regulation (Directive 2009/40/EC) powered two wheelers (PTWs) are now also included (motorcycles, scooters and mopeds) and the Commission proposes to increase the testing frequency to four years after the date on which the vehicle was first registered, then two years and thereafter annually for all vehicles.

Although the Commission claims that "8 % of all motorcycle accidents are linked to technical defects," FEMA doubts the accuracy of such figures and cites in-depth studies showing technical failures only account for 0.3% of all primary accident contributing factors. "In addition the countries in Europe with periodic testing regimes for PTWs do not show improved accident figures," according to FEMA.

"This is nothing less than a tax on poverty for those who cannot afford a new vehicle every three years" says FEMA General Secretary Aline Delhaye. "In terms of time and money, the cost for citizens is going to be astronomical, with no benefits in return."

Freedom in the Land of Enchantment

New Mexico is one of 31 states that do not require adults to wear helmets, and that's not likely to change says KRQE-News13, noting that "Motorcycle rider rights organizations are working diligently to keep it that way not because they don't want people to wear helmets but because they want people to be able to decide for themselves."

"Too many people are dying on our roads and all I'm asking is for people to look out for motorcyclists," said Annette Torrez, Chair of the NM Motorcycle Riders Rights Organization. "I don't want legislation telling me whether I should or shouldn't wear a helmet," said Torrez, who was recently recognized for her efforts at the annual NCOM Convention with a Silver Spoke Award.

It's been about a decade since an adult helmet law was last introduced in the state legislature, and lawmakers told the news agency that is because the idea is always met with angry opposition not only from motorcycle groups but other lawmakers too. "There's always individuals that you're seeing here that come up to Santa Fe and institute their rights and say you know what, we really don't want to see it and these are individuals who wear helmets on a regular basis," said NM State Representative Rick Miera (D-Bernalillo County).



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