

News For Thought



Congressman Challenges The Science Of E15 Gas

U.S. Representative Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) has introduced legislation to require the Environmental Protection Agency to "seek independent scientific analysis on the effects of 15 percent blend ethanol gasoline" (E15), which the EPA recently allowed to be sold for use in 2001 or newer vehicles; though motorcycles and ATVs are not approved for its use, nor are most small air-cooled engines, and using the hotter-burning fuel could cause premature wear, engine damage and void the manufacturer's warranty.

"The EPA's decision to allow E15 into the marketplace will impact every American who owns a car, lawnmower, or boat," said Sensenbrenner in announcing his bill, H.R.3199. "Automakers insist that using E15 will void warranties, lower fuel efficiency, and cause premature engine failure. In off-road engines, the effects can even be dangerous for users."

Motorcyclists should be concerned about the availability of compatible fuel supplies if gas stations primarily provide E15 gasoline that's EPA-approved for the majority of their customers -- but no on- or off-road motorcycles or ATVs appear on the EPA's list of vehicles approved for use of E15.

"There are serious concerns that the EPA used only one Department of Energy test and rushed E15's introduction into the market place. This test was limited in scope and ignored a plethora of evidence - albeit inconvenient evidence for the EPA - that shows E15 gasoline has a negative effect on engines," according to Sensenbrenner. "I introduced this legislation to ensure a decision of this magnitude will be vetted by independent scientific research, rather than political expediency."

Earlier this summer, Congressman Sensenbrenner, who is the Vice Chair of the House Committee on Science, introduced H.R. 748 to prohibit the EPA from authorizing the use of gasoline containing greater than 10% ethanol (E10).

No Colors" Rule Rescinded At Kentucky Event

Following failed negotiations with Beech Bend Park near Bowling Green, Kentucky upon announcing they would no longer allow club colors of any kind at their All Harley Drags, the Kentucky Motorcycle Association/KBA called for a boycott of their events until this discriminatory policy was changed.

"After the word went out it is my understanding that several hundred phone calls went to the offices of Beech Bend Park," said Jay Huber, President of KMA/KBA. "As a result of those calls the management at Beech Bend has reversed its decision regarding NO COLORS at its events."

"The KMA/KBA along with the Kentucky Confederation of Clubs is committed to eliminating this type of discrimination as it hurts the entire biker community," said Huber, adding that his organization will post listings on their website of businesses that discriminate with regard to No-Colors and urge "that ALL bikers please refrain from using the services of any business that participates in this type of action."

Michigan Requests Your Support For Helmet Freedom

Michigan may be on the verge of repealing their mandatory helmet law as Senate Bill 291 appears destined for the governor's desk, and ABATE of Michigan has issued a "Call to Action" requesting the help of all motorcyclists in their freedom of choice efforts. SB291 passed the Michigan Senate 24-14 in late June, and is now back for a "concurrent vote" after passing the House 69-39 on Nov 2nd, so a favorable vote will put ABATE's hopes in the hands of Governor Rick Snyder who has not indicated whether he will sign or veto the measure. Two previous repeal bills were vetoed by then-Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

"Governor Snyder prides himself on being all about business and helping business," said Vince Consiglio, President of ABATE of MI, adding; "A letter from a 'FREE' State may help him realize Michigan loses motorcycle money every day of the summer with a mandatory helmet law."

Under the bill, motorcyclists 21 and older would have the option of riding helmet-free if they have two years of experience or have taken a safety course, and if they buy at least \$20,000 in medical insurance.

"Please urge Governor Snyder to support adult choice," requests Consiglio on behalf of ABATE, by contacting Governor Rick Snyder, State Capital, P.O. Box 30013, Lansing, MI 48909 or call (517) 373-3400 or e-mail Rick.Snyder@michigan.gov.

International Motorcycle Safety Reports Released

Headlight configurations that make motorcycles more noticeable, why drivers fail to give way to motorcycles at T-intersections, and how mirror use influences car-motorcycle conflicts are among the topics researched and reported on in the new January issue of Accident Analysis & Prevention (AA&P), a journal primarily focused on causes and impacts of transportation accidents.

The themed AA&P edition is titled "Safety and Mobility of Vulnerable Road Users: Pedestrians, Bicyclists, and Motorcyclists" and consists of a selection of papers presented at an international conference organized by Israel's National Road Safety Authority.

In a report entitled "Recognizability of different configurations of front lights on motorcycles," the researchers say that "Results of a laboratory experiment have shown that motorcycles with a T-shaped light configuration are more quickly identified, particularly when the motorcycles are in visual competition with other motorized road users."

In "Why do car drivers fail to give way to motorcycles at t-junctions?," researchers studied differences between novice drivers, experienced drivers, and "dual drivers," i.e., drivers who also ride motorcycles. They found that dual drivers were better at recognizing motorcycles than either of the other two groups. While the results are inconclusive, the researchers state that "We argue that this is potential evidence for an oculomotor basis for Look But Fail To See errors."

The report "Attention and search conspicuity of motorcycles as a function of their visual context" says that multi-colored, reflective, and white rider outfits consistently made the riders more noticeable than a black outfit.

Cars changing lanes without recognizing that a motorcycle is in that lane is a common experience for motorcyclists, and that topic is addressed in "Attending overtaking cars and motorcycles through the mirrors before changing lanes." Not surprisingly, the researchers found that "Risky maneuvers were less likely to occur in those cases

where more time was spent gazing at the mirrors."

Other reports in this issue address other motorcycle-related issues, and can be accessed on a for-pay basis, but abstracts of the reports are available on the journal's website at www.journals.elsevier.com.

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Nationwide Motorcycle Thefts Down

A motorcycle is stolen every 9.5 minutes in America, but according to a report by the National Insurance Crime Bureau, motorcycle thefts last year were down 24% from their 2007 total. There were 65,678 motorcycles reported stolen in 2007 compared with 49,791 in 2010, according to

data from theft reports contained in the National Crime Information Center.

The top five makes stolen last year were: (1) Honda, 12,260; (2) Yamaha, 9,853; (3) Suzuki, 7,869; (4) Kawasaki, 5,470; and (5) Harley-Davidson, 3,301. Combined, these five brands accounted for 38,753 thefts in 2010, or 77.8 percent of the total.

The top five states with the most motorcycle thefts in 2010 were: (1) California, 5,662; (2) Texas, 4,394; (3) Florida, 4,148; (4) North Carolina, 2,649; and (5) Indiana, 1,925. These five states accounted for 18,778 thefts, or 37.7% of the total.

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