

News For Thought

COAST TO COAST BIKER NEWS
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New Motorcycle Sales could Top 1 Million

The motorcycle industry has experienced 12 years of consecutive growth, and 24 percent more units have been sold in the last four years than in the entire preceding decade (1990-1999).

According to Motorcycle Industry Council estimates, year-to-date sales are up 4.4 percent through Fall 2004, marking the 12th consecutive year of growth for the United States motorcycle market. "Motorcycling today is more mainstream than ever -- and the numbers prove it," notes the MIC. "The new MIC Owner Survey shows that since 1998, there has been a 34 percent increase in the number of motorcycles in use in the United States. Motorcycles are everywhere -- in advertising, editorial layouts, movies, television -- they're an iconic representation of freedom and individualism in our American culture."

In 2003, strong demand generated new unit motorcycle sales of more than 996,000 units, up from 936,000 in 2002. If the current growth rate continues, MIC estimates that 2004 sales of new motorcycles could top 1 million units.

'risco Named Bikertown USA

Motorcyclist magazine has crowned San Francisco and the Bay area as the best motorcycle town in America, and the San Francisco Herald trumpeted the news in a September news story.

The paper said that what makes this place Biker Central is a feeling in the local motorcycle world that the area is, as it is in other walks of life, tolerant of bikers, perhaps even friendly. Motorcycling in the Bay Area is supported by a number of factors,

some of them tangible -- like the motorcycle only parking meters sprinkled around the city. "There can be only one Best Motorcycling City," wrote Motorcyclist magazine, "and among all the United States of America's roughly 19,355 incorporated burgs, you can't beat San Francisco." "Great roads, great weather, great shops and great hangouts

make the Bay Area a no-brainer as the best place in the U.S. for two-wheeled citizens." The also-rans were San Diego, Atlanta, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Minneapolis, Denver, Daytona Beach and Columbus, Ohio.

New Hampshire Bill would Muffle Motorcycles

The noise generated by motorcyclists touring the coastline has motivated a group of Seacoast-area lawmakers to file a bill request with the Legislature asking the state to revise the standards for testing motorcycle noise and limiting exhaust systems.

"The communities that have a lot of motorcycle (traffic) on Sunday afternoons are the ones who have an interest here," said Portsmouth City Attorney Robert Sullivan, who helped draft the bill request after being approached by the police chiefs of Portsmouth and Rye.

It would ban "straight-pipe" exhaust systems, referring to those that don't have mufflers with noise-reducing baffles. The proposal would prohibit motorcyclists from modifying a bike's exhaust system to make it louder than the muffler originally installed on the vehicle.

The law also would prohibit motorcycles from generating a noise level measured at greater than 110 decibels. Riders found to be not in compliance with the new standards would be guilty of a traffic violation. New Hampshire Bill would Muffle Motorcycles

High Tech License Plates Come Under Fire in Nebraska

One customer complained so much about Nebraska's new computer-generated flat license plates that an office worker at the motor vehicles office scrounged up traditional steel plates for his motorcycle. Some say the new plates look flimsy or cheap, other say they look like cardboard, but state officials are lauding the switch to lightweight aluminum plates.

A box of 50 new plates weighs 30 pounds less than a box of the old steel plates, said Beverly Neth, director of Nebraska's Department of Motor Vehicles. The new plates also are easy to read with clearer and more defined lines -- and have earned approval from state police. A year ago, Nebraska State Penitentiary inmates began making the flat plates with equipment leased from 3-M Corporation. The change is a mixed blessing for the prison industry, which puts out all of Nebraska's license plates. The old process was labor-intensive and kept 35 to 40 inmates busy. The new computer-run process uses about 20 inmates, said John McGovern, superintendent of Cornhusker Industries at the penitentiary.

"That's the bad news for us, since it is our mission to employ inmates," he said

Health Insurance measure Introduced in Oregon

Although federal legislation to prohibit health care providers from discriminating against insured, who are injured while riding a motorcycle, ATV, or while participating in so-called "risky activities", was the last bill passed by the U.S. Senate on November 21st, S.423 died just days later when the House adjourned for the session without taking action.

Not content to wait for Congress to act, BikePAC of Oregon has requested State Senator Frank Shields to introduce legislative concepts draft 1068. LC 1068 would close the loophole that allows health insurers to deny medical coverage to motorcycle accident victims.

ABATE of Colorado successfully amended state law in 1997 to make it illegal to deny medical benefits to employees based on their participation in such activities, effectively overriding federal HIPPA regulations.

Gang Bill Filed in South Carolina

State Senators Jake Knotts (R-West Columbia) and Dick Elliott (D-North Myrtle Beach) have pre-filed a bill that would make it illegal to intimidate someone into joining or leaving a gang. A similar bill has been filed in the House.

The legislation defines a criminal gang as five or more people who organize to commit criminal activity, which could include hate groups, motorcycle gangs and terrorist groups. Steve Nawojczyk, a gang expert from Little Rock, Ark., said the measure is similar to what other states have enacted. Richland County Assistant Prosecutor David Pascoe said the bill could help better prove a defendant is a gang member.

Sometimes, such information is not presented to a jury because the information could be prejudicial, he said. Knotts has tried unsuccessfully for several years to pass a bill making intimidation of prospective members illegal. Last year, a bill made it to the Senate floor but died without a vote.