

News For Thought



European Bikers Protest Vehicle Inspection Plan

Thousands of motorcyclists rolled into Belgium to protest an EU proposal for regular mandatory bike inspections. The law would be "expensive and useless," said representatives from the Federation of European Motorcyclists' Association (FEMA) who met with European Union officials EU headquarters in Brussels as more than 4,500 motorcycles roared through the city's streets, protesting the proposed law that would introduce mandatory EU-wide road-worthiness tests for motorcycles.

The new EU-wide regulations would supersede national safety inspection rules for four-wheel and two-wheel vehicles, and FEMA said the law would offer "no benefits expected in terms of safety, as proven by several independent studies."

Members of Belgium's Federation of Angry Bikers (FBMC) turned out in large numbers for the protest. "Only 0.3 percent of motorcycle accidents in Belgium and 0.6 percent in Europe are due to technical problems," FBMC head Joe Verrecke told the Belgian news agency Belga.

Deer Take Deadly Toll On Motorcyclists

"When a deer collides with a vehicle that weighs a couple of tons, the fragile animal almost always gets the worst of it. When a deer meets a motorcycle on the roadway, both the rider and the deer may suffer the same fate," stated the Washington Post in reporting on research by AAA that found that seven of the eight people who died in crashes involving deer over a three-year period in Maryland and Virginia were motorcyclists. Nationwide, the auto club said, about 70% of deer-crash fatalities involve motorcycles.

"Because they are riding on two wheels, motorcycle riders and their passengers are especially vulnerable when they smash into a deer," said John B. Townsend II, an AAA spokesman.

The deer mortality rate becomes most evident this time of year, as the mating season has more deer on the move. Their carcasses by the roadside attest to the danger that the lure of romance poses for them and for drivers.

In 2010, the latest year for which there are national statistics, 403 people were killed in accidents involving deer.

Fatalities Fall In Michigan After Helmet Repeal

"The numbers speak for themselves," said Vince Consiglio, president of ABATE Michigan, in announcing a decrease in motorcycle deaths since the state repealed their mandatory helmet law. Despite dire predictions to the contrary, motorcycle fatalities actually have dropped by 7% based on statistics obtained from the Michigan State Police and the Michigan Secretary of State.

On April 12, 2012, the requirement for motorcycle helmets was amended to allow adult choice for bikers 21 and older, providing they completed an accredited motorcycle-safety course or had a minimum of two years riding experience.

According to an ABATE press release, from 2011 (pre-amendment) to 2012 (post amendment) motorcycle fatalities dropped from 89 to 85 in Michigan, a 4.5% reduction. During the same time period, the number of motorcycle registrations increased from 261,658 to 266,589, so ABATE concludes; "If the fatality rate is adjusted to the total of motorcycle registrations it shows that the fatality rate has decreased from 0.034% to 0.031% since the helmet-law amendment - a seven percent reduction."

"This data proves conclusively that the helmet-law amendment had no adverse effect on motorcycle safety," Consiglio told The Detroit News.

Palestinians Crack Down On Motorcycles

Lawmakers in Gaza have continued their draconian campaign against motorcycle usage, taking the bold step of banning the import of spare parts for motorcycles into the ancient Palestinian city.

Interior Ministry official Hassan Akashed has admitted that the move aims to directly reduce the number of motorcycles, which he claims are a main cause of car accidents.

According to visordown.com, motorcyclists in the city have been subject to an ongoing crack down, banning them from riding after midnight, and restricting women from riding. The Interior Ministry recently announced that it was banning women from riding bikes or being pillion passengers, to limit accidents and "protect community values."

Israel's blockade of Gaza has meant that parts for cars have been impossible to get hold of and the cost of maintaining them has become unsustainable for most. As a result, motorcycles have seen a huge surge in popularity. Just five years ago there were only about a dozen or so motorcycles in the city, but the number of motorcycles in Gaza had grown to around 15,000 by 2010.

Motorcycle Thefts Decline

A total of 46,667 motorcycles were reported stolen in 2011, and 17,199 of them were recovered, according to a report released today by the National Insurance Crime Bureau. That compares to 49,791 stolen bikes in 2010, a decrease of 6%.

California, the most populous U.S. state and the one with the most stolen motorcycles since the NICB began collecting data in 1996, retained its top spot with 5,927 thefts last year. It was followed by Texas, Florida, North Carolina and Indiana. The state reporting the lowest number of thefts was North Dakota (21) followed by Wyoming, South Dakota, Vermont, Alaska, and Montana.

Recoveries of stolen motorcycles were largely proportional to thefts, with California the leader in recoveries (2,085) followed by Florida (1,334), Texas (965), Indiana (769), and North Carolina (725). The overall average time of recoveries was 31 days.


July and August were the biggest months for thefts in the U.S. last year, with more than 5,000 each, compared with 2,147 in February, the report shows.

Whereas the number of thefts increases dramatically in the warmer months, the day of the week seems to be of no significance. On Mondays, the day of the largest number, there were 6,962 bikes stolen. The number on Sundays, the day of the lowest number, there were 6,422.

More than 500 motorcycle makes were among those stolen last year, but the highest percentage of bikes stolen were of the Honda brand, at 24%. Yamaha was next (19%), followed by Suzuki (16%), Kawasaki (11%) and Harley-Davidson (7%).

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