

News For Thought



Making Noise About Noise

As states like New York and New Hampshire wrestle with anti-noise legislation that would prohibit modifications to factory-installed exhaust systems, the Motorcycle Industry Council is seeking to postpone further legislative action pending their development of a new sound test.

In comments to the N.H. House Transportation Committee, the MIC stated that they and the Society of Automotive Engineers are finalizing a new stationary sound test, SAE J2825, which will provide a quick, easy, economical, and science-based tool for accurately identifying motorcycles with excessively noisy exhaust systems.

"Our goal is to provide a consistent tool nationwide for identifying excessively loud exhaust systems without failing those that pass the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency federal sound limit," said Pamela Amette, vice president of the MIC. "This sound test will effectively achieve the sound control goals of New Hampshire, and other states and municipalities, and more so than some of the proposed legislation currently being considered. On a national level, it will eliminate a lot of the confusion and frustration for motorcyclists when they ride through different jurisdictions."

Amette said that California, numerous local jurisdictions, and Canada have expressed interest in the new test that was developed through extensive sound testing during 2007. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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Consumer Reports Tests Motorcycles

Fueled by painfully high gasoline prices, 2008 saw many consumers looking for new alternatives to big-bucks fill-ups at the pump. With rising consumer interest in lower-priced two-wheelers that sip rather than guzzle gas and thousands of new riders on the road, Consumer Reports has tested small motor scooters and motorcycles for the first time since 1981.

"When fuel prices crossed the \$4.00 per gallon mark, some consumers shifted gears and two wheels became a cost-saving alternative," said Rik Paul, automotive editor, Consumer Reports. "And, despite current low gas costs, interest in scooters and motorcycles may continue to increase, especially in urban areas where parking space is at a premium."

Consumer Reports tested a total of eight fuel-sipping, small-displacement motorcycle and scooter models. Like Consumer Reports in-depth auto testing process, scooters and motorcycles were subjected to an extensive sequence of standardized tests to determine their performance in categories such as acceleration, braking, fuel economy, noise/vibration, top speed and comfort.

The full report is available in the March 2009 issue of Consumer Reports and online at www.ConsumerReports.org. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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ROW Bill Filed in New Mexico

A Failure to Yield the Right of Way bill has been introduced in New Mexico by State Representative Rick Miera, a longtime motorcyclists' rights advocate and member of the National Coalition of Motorcyclists Legislative Task Force (NCOM-LTF).

The bill will increase the penalties imposed for Failing to Yield the Right of Way. The current penalties for Failure to Yield is a fine of \$25.00 to \$50.00 no matter the severity of the accident. Careless driving which also falls under the Failure to Yield Statutes is only a \$125.00 fine! HB 290 would increase the penalties to \$200.00 or 30 day suspension of driver's license causing NO great bodily harm or death. Great Bodily harm would hold a penalty of \$500.00 or 30 day suspension of driver's license. Failing to Yield causing Death would hold a penalty of \$1000.00 or 6 months suspension of driver's license.

HB 290 is now headed to the Transportation and Public Works Committee, and concerned riders are being asked by the New Mexico Motorcyclists Rights Organization,

ABATE and the Confederation of Clubs to contact their legislators seeking support for the proposed ROW legislation. Your state rep can be contacted by calling the switchboard at (505) 986-4300. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Motorcyclists Reap Rewards From Economic Stimulus Package

Motorcycling will reap some benefits from the historic two-year, \$787 billion economic recovery and stimulus bill recently signed into law by President Barack Obama. Language in HR 1, the largest spending measure ever enacted by Congress, provides for a tax credit for people buying new passenger cars and light-duty trucks, and now thanks to eleventh hour lobbying efforts by motorcycle groups and manufacturers, federal tax relief will extend to purchasers of new motorcycles as well.

Section 1008 of the legislation includes motorcycles as "qualified vehicles", and individuals purchasing a new motorcycle will be allowed to deduct the sales and excise taxes on their 2009 tax returns.

Four senators successfully lobbied for including motorcycles in the compromise measure: Bob Casey, D-Pa.; Christopher Bond, R-Mo., Russell Feingold, D-Wis., and Herb Kohl, D-Wis.

"The issues of consumer confidence and tight credit markets have not evaded motorcycle dealers," the four senators wrote to congressional leaders who put the finishing touches on the stimulus bill. "The effect of the downturn not only impacts the dealers - it has hurt manufacturers as well."

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Expansion of the tax credit should attract more motorcycle buyers, Feingold said in a joint press release with Kohl. To be eligible for this "above the line" tax deduction, you must make less than \$125,000 (\$250,000 for those filing jointly) and purchase a new bike in 2009 for up to \$49,500. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Weird News: Motorcycle Surveillance System Installed in U.K.

A new surveillance system installed on eight routes in Derbyshire, England designed to track movements of motorcyclists on the roads will be operational by Easter.

The technology can tell motorcycles apart from other vehicles, measure their speeds and will be able to read number plates under plans. Data such as the routes taken by individual motorcyclists along with time and date will be collected and kept even if they have committed no offense.

The project has prompted civil rights groups to express grave concerns about the potential for invasion of motorcyclists' privacy.

Speed camera bosses behind the scheme have named it the "motorcycle data project" and the equipment a "motorcycle detection system". It will scrutinize movements of motorcyclists in particular and be switched on to coincide with the start of the riding season in April, they say.

The Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership said the aim was to "gather intelligence" to "prevent motorcycle casualties" through measures such as speed warning signs, extra police patrols and safer roadside barriers.

But Isabella Sankey, Director of Policy for the civil rights group Liberty, said: "The road to massive-scale real-time surveillance is paved with good intentions. We have no problem with ANPR being used to locate vehicles whose owners the police firmly suspect of having committed an offence but it shouldn't be used as a tool of mass surveillance." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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