

News For Thought



Motorcycle Safety Act Becomes Law In Wisconsin

Governor Scott Walker signed AB55 into law, reports ABATE of Wisconsin, which not only clarifies penalties for right-of-way violations but also establishes motorcycle awareness training in Drivers-Ed courses.

AB55 provides a technical correction for 2006 Wisconsin Act 466, moving the penalty provisions from the courts to an administrative function of the DMV. All right-of-way violators that cause serious injury or death on Wisconsin's roadways will be subject to up to a one thousand dollar fine and up to a nine month license suspension and must complete a DOT approved right-of-way awareness class before being reinstated. Also, AB55 adds a mandatory minimum of thirty minutes of motorcycle awareness training in all drivers' education classrooms throughout the state.

"It is ABATE of Wisconsin's hope that the education and awareness portions of this law will help promote responsible driving on Wisconsin's roadways and make our roads safer for all roadway users," said the motorcyclists' rights organization in a prepared statement. www.ON-A-BIKE.com.

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Data Shows Highest Risk For New Motorcyclists

Safety studies show the most dangerous time for motorcyclists is their first year riding, peaking in the first month. For motorcycle riders, their first 30 days are about four times more risky than their entire second year. A study by the

Highway Loss Data Institute shows 22% of nearly 57,000 collision claims from 2003 to 2007 occurred within 30 days of a new policy taking effect. The claim rate then dropped by one-third in the second month and by almost two-thirds after six months. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Motorcyclists Charged With Terrorism For Noisy Exhaust

Prosecutors in violence-stricken northern Mexico have brought terrorism charges against two motorcyclists because their loud exhaust pipes backfired and caused a sound like gunshots that sent a crowd into a panicked stampede.

The two motorcyclists were leaving their workplace near the main square of the northern city of San Luis Potosi, where an Easter week festival was being held. The two got on their bikes and fired them up, and that is when the confusion began. Because the backfiring of the engines sounded like the popping of gunshots, hundreds of people stampeded out of the square seeking cover. But the streets were nearly blocked by vendor stalls, causing the crowd to pile up and resulting in some people getting trampled.

That, not the motorcycle engines, was the real problem, according to the state Human Rights Commission, which has launched an investigation into the arrests and noted that the two suspects had been beaten by police.

State law defines terrorism as acts that "produce alarm, terror or fear in the population ... to disturb the public peace or try to undermine government authority." Officials say state criminal codes often lack lesser but more appropriate charges to handle situations involving acts that may be irresponsible but are hardly criminal.

It would all seem like a tempest in a teapot, if the two men weren't facing possible sentences of five to 20 years in prison if convicted. While that seems like harsh punishment for a noisy exhaust, authorities said such irresponsible behavior is a real problem for states where drug-gang gunbattles have terrorized residents in recent years.

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Predicting Future Cycles

The Motorcycle Industry Council has reported a 7.2% gain in first quarter motorcycle sales across 18 leading brands, and a staggering 50% increase in scooter sales – suggesting that the recent spike in gas prices is inspiring more Americans to take to two wheels.

The MIC also notes that total on-highway tire sales rose 27.5% for motorcycles and 48.6% for scooters, indicating that already-owned bikes are seeing usage.

Market prognostication is an iffy proposition at best, but the MIC is boldly offering their first ever estimate for future motorcycle sales, though it's not an entirely rosy outlook. Regarding the remainder of 2012, MIC president Tim Buche says "Even with low interest rates making this a great time to buy for many people, overall economic uncertainty is leading us to predict we'll have fewer sales in 2012."

The MIC does offer a positive observation: "Spending on maintenance and repairs has been rising since April 2010, according to the business advisory, suggesting that the market for consumers taking care of bikes they've long owned, or improving used bikes they've recently purchased, could continue to improve." The MIC also states that tire sales confirm that riders are putting more miles on their motorcycles, suggesting that while new bike sales might be weak, interest in the sport isn't waning. www.ON-A-BIKE.com.

Kentucky Motorcycle Licensing Measure Passes

"HB 328 was signed into law by Governor Steve Beshear on April 11th, 2012," announced Jay Huber, State President of the Kentucky Motorcycle Association in a legislative alert to KMA/KBA members. "In short this bill does two things: Stops the cycle of people riding around on a permit for years and years along with providing a way for 16 and 17 year olds to once again get a motorcycle license."

According to the bill's digest, the new law will "allow a person who has received an intermediate operator's license to apply for a motorcycle instruction permit; make a motorcycle instruction permit good for 1 year, with the ability to renew the permit 1 time, allow a person whose motorcycle instruction permit has expired apply for a motorcycle operator's license if the person can present proof of successful completion of a motorcycle safety education course." www.ON-A-BIKE.com.

New Virginia Law Allows Motorcyclists To Ride Side-By-Side

Motorcyclists are eager to legally cruise side-by-side now that Governor Bob McDonnell has signed legislation permitting them to ride two abreast in a single driving lane in Virginia.

House Bill 97, sponsored by Delegate Tony Wilt (R-Harrisonburg), passed overwhelmingly 87-10 in the House and 38-2 in the Senate, and will now allow two-wheeled motorcycles to drive alongside each other in one lane. State law currently prohibits motorcyclists from riding next to one another, and violators can be charged with reckless driving.

"The bill allows riders to use their own judgment in determining when it is appropriate to ride beside someone, but does not require them to do so," said Del. Wilt. "One goal is to eliminate the harsh punishment placed on riders for doing something as innocent as pulling aside another rider while stopped or taking off together after being stopped."

Virginia will become the 49th state to accommodate two-abreast riding when the new law takes effect July 1. Vermont remains the only state to prohibit the practice.

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