

News For Thought



Scaled Back Motorcycle Accident Study Underway & Under Fire

The first major study of motorcycle crashes in nearly 30 years is underway in Los Angeles, as researchers attempt to pinpoint why resultant fatalities have soared over the last decade. The last in-depth investigation of motorcycle crashes in the U.S. -- the Hurt study -- was released in 1981.

Efforts to update that information have been stymied by funding issues, reports the Los Angeles Times, and the study will be a scaled-down version of what was originally planned, and some motorcycle groups are criticizing the effort including a leading industry-backed safety group that says the sample size will be too small to properly resolve the questions.

The National Transportation Safety Board originally recommended that the study include a sample size of 900 to 1,200 crashes. But researchers at Oklahoma State University, tapped to conduct the new study, said use of such a large sample would cost \$10 million to \$12 million, far exceeding the federal government's \$4.2-million estimate. The Motorcycle Crash Causation Study is currently moving forward with a sample size of 300 crashes.

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation, a nonprofit group funded by major manufacturers, had offered \$2.8 million in 2007 for a study if it included a sample size of 900 crashes, but the group refused to contribute to the abbreviated study because industry and safety experts believe it "will not provide adequate sampling to achieve appropriate statistical significance and may not provide new insights," the organization said in a statement. "This limited study will likely lend only a minimal degree of validation to the major, already known contributing motorcycle crash factors."

There are about 100,000 motorcycle crashes in the U.S. each year, 5,290 of which resulted in death in 2008. According to the MSF, major crash factors include rider error, such as overbraking and running wide in a curve; and alcohol involvement. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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"Smart Aging" Study Investigates Brain Stimulation While Riding

Yamaha Motor has announced a second round of joint research into "Smart Aging" with Tohoku University in Japan on the subject of the relationship between motorcycle riding and brain stimulation.

The focus of this research will be the measurement and analysis of the cause and effect relationship involved in the operation of various types of vehicles and brain stimulation and measuring the changes in such stimulation over time by means of data gathered from a long-term mass survey in the market.

The findings of the first research project in 2008 included: When riding a motorcycle, the brain of the rider is stimulated; Differences in brain use and level of brain stimulation can be observed in motorcyclists who ride regularly and in motorcyclists who have not ridden for extended periods; Incorporating motorcycle riding into daily life improves various cognitive functions and has positive effects on mental and emotional health such as stress reduction.

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The second research project has now begun and Yamaha will provide motorcycles for the study, make its test courses available for subject testing, and solicit test participants and staff. Testing will continue through December, and Yamaha hopes the results will contribute to the vitalization of the motorcycle market. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Australian Bikers Victorious in Court

Two members of the Finks MC who had been banned from meeting other bikers under strict anti-association laws passed in South Australia designed to disband outlawed "bikie gangs" by restricting their movements, appealed their case to the Supreme Court which has ruled the orders were invalid.

Similar anti-bikie legislation is pending in Queensland and New South Wales, but members of the United Motorcycle Council, a biker lobby group formed in response to the laws, says the high court's ruling should come as a warning to the government that such laws are "illegal and unconstitutional".

A UMC spokesman said the decision was a victory for members of clubs and organizations everywhere. "The laws give police unfettered power to use secret, false and illegally obtained evidence against individuals, take away the right to an open and fair trial, and reverse the time-honored presumption of innocence," said Ferret. "They trample long-standing legal and civil rights of all citizens, and they have no place in a democratic and civilized society." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Weird News: Muslim Extremists Ban Women From Motorcycles

Hamas, a militant Islamic political party that governs the Gaza Strip, has banned women from riding motorcycles. Effective immediately, Gaza women will not be allowed to drive motorbikes and men are forbidden from carrying them as passengers, raising fresh concerns over the movement's ultra-conservative agenda.

In a decision that would raise eyebrows in other parts of the globe, the Interior Ministry said it was banning women from two-wheelers to limit accidents and to "to preserve citizen safety and the stability of Palestinian society's customs and traditions".

The group insists compliance with the campaign is voluntary and reflects Gaza's conservative ways, but reports have surfaced of offenders being beaten or arrested.

The move is the latest step in an "Islamification" campaign by Hamas, which has been classified as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and European Union. Hamas seeks to impose a strict interpretation of Islamic code, including obliging female lawyers to wear headscarves in court and attempting to ban the display of women's underwear in shop windows. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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Aim Attorney Ralph Vinje Killed in Right- Of- Way Violation

Aid to Injured Motorcyclists is saddened to report that North Dakota A.I.M. Attorney Ralph Vinje, 67, of Bismarck, N.D. has died from injuries suffered in an accident while on his way to work. According to police reports, Vinje was northbound and was struck at an intersection by an eastbound car whose driver failed to obey a Yield sign.

Vinje was a well-known attorney in the area, handling criminal defense and civil cases. He was a longtime Aid to Injured Motorcyclists attorney who served as legal counsel for the Confederation of Clubs of North Dakota and provided legal representation to motorcyclists in accident cases and other litigation proceedings. He represented ABATE of North Dakota in a battle over a noise ordinance in Bismarck that discriminated against motorcycle enthusiasts.

Over the years, Vinje fought to stop a law that lowered the legal driving limit for alcohol from .10 BAC to .08, and also tried to prove sobriety checkpoints unconstitutional.

In court, Vinje was known for his mild manner and calm demeanor, while outside of the courtroom he enjoyed the outdoors as an avid hunter, fisherman, traveler and motorcyclist who rode his motorcycle every Wednesday afternoon as long as the weather was good with the Freedom Riders Motorcycle Club.

He also was part owner of the Broken Oar Bar in Mandan and was a Vietnam veteran who earned a Bronze Star for his service to our country.

His daughter-in-law, Tiffany Johnson, told the newspaper that "He was a rebel spirit" who had helped scores of people with battles that needed fighting. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Quotable Quote: "A nation of sheep will beget a government of wolves."
Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965) U.S. broadcast journalist www.ON-A-BIKE.com