

News For Thought



More Motorcycles, more Novice Riders

Not everybody is screaming bloody murder over rising gasoline prices, reports ConsumerAffairs.com -- motorcycle manufacturers are ecstatic.

According to the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, more than 350,000 people will take its new-rider course in 2006 -- a 10 per cent increase over the year before. So many people want to ride that there's a waiting list for spots in the class. The wait can sometimes take months.

The Motorcycle Industry Council, also based in California, knows the number of riders is rising rapidly. Sales of motorcycles and scooters climbed 8 per cent in the first quarter of 2006, compared to the same period of last year, and is expected to continue its upward spiral.

Because of rising fuel prices, there are a lot more novices on motorcycles. In fact, the American Motorcyclist Association reports that 35 per cent of motorcycle owners plan to be on their bikes more as a direct result of pumped-up prices at the pump. The typical motorcycle gets 50 miles per gallon of gas, while the average passenger car gets less than half of that -- 22.4 miles. www.aimncom.com

Canadian City Institutes "No Colors" Policy

"Wearing colors of known criminal biker gangs is now officially unwelcome on city property," reported the Alberta Daily Herald Tribune, as Grande Prairie Mayor Wayne Ayling put up the first no-gang-colors policy sign on the front doors of City Hall to

officially start the city's public campaign against criminal biker gangs.

"We believe it is inappropriate for people to advertise that they belong to a criminal gang on city property," said Ayling. He said although Grande Prairie is the first city in Western Canada to have such a program in place, three other major cities in Ontario - Barrie, Durham, and Toronto - already have similar programs.

Ayling said the goal now is to get local businesses to put up no-gang-colors signs on their premises, though he admitted that may be a hard sell for some local businesses that regularly have motorcyclists as customers.

Quality Hotel, for example, is involved in the Canadian Championship of Bike Building in Wembley and was involved with the Western Canadian Bike Builders Showcase last year. The hotel's general manager, Felix Seiler, said volunteering to support such a policy would put staff into the role of enforcers, something many are not qualified to do or should not be asked to do.

Mark Rodacker is manager of Countryside Motor Sports Inc., which deals with many clients that are into motorcycles. He felt the policy was "ridiculous" therefore his business wouldn't be involved with the program. "They seem to label anyone who owns a motorcycle as a biker and that being part of a biker club means they're going to be bad. They're stereotyping all bikers," he said.

The National Coalition of Motorcyclists (NCOM) has long fought against discriminatory legislation and opposes dress codes in public accommodations that unfairly discriminate against bikers. NCOM supports anti-discrimination laws that prevent establishments from discriminating against motorcyclists based on style of dress or mode of transportation. www.aimncom.com

QUOTABLE QUOTE: "To believe is very dull. To doubt is intensely engrossing. To be on the alert is to live. To be lulled into security is to die."

Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900) Anglo-Irish poet/playwright

Who wants Helmets

The World Health Organization (WHO), a specialized health agency of the United Nations with 191 member states, is stressing the need for mandatory helmet laws worldwide and has published a road safety manual giving technical advice to governments on how to assess current helmet use and design programs to increase helmet wearing.

According to their estimates, motorcyclists account for more than 50 percent of the 1.2 million killed in road crashes every year, adding that the majority of those who die or are disabled in motorcycle accidents are from low and middle income nations, which is why the WHO is intensifying efforts to support governments to increase helmet use through their new publication -- "Helmets: a road safety manual for decision-makers and practitioners."

The manual is a follow-up to the World Report on road traffic injury prevention, published in 2004 by WHO and the World Bank, which provided evidence that establishing and enforcing mandatory helmet use is an effective intervention for reducing injuries and fatalities among two-wheeler users. The manual has been produced under the auspices of the UN road safety collaboration, in collaboration with the Global Road Safety Partnership, the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society, and the World Bank, as one of a series of documents that aim to provide practical advice on implementing the recommendations of the World Report.

"We want to make helmet use a high priority for national public health systems," says Dr. Anders Nordström, Acting Director-General of WHO. "We need to stress not only the effectiveness of helmets in saving lives, but the fact that helmet programs are good value for money. Countries will recoup their investment in these programs many times over through savings to their health care systems, as well as savings to other sectors."

Many countries have succeeded in raising rates of helmet use through adopting laws that make helmet use compulsory, enforcing these laws, and raising public awareness about the laws, as well as the benefits of helmet use.

"The importance of increasing helmet use follows dramatic growth in motorization around the world, largely from increasing use of motorized two-wheelers, particularly in Asian countries. In China, for example, motorcycle ownership over the last ten years has increased rapidly. In 2004 it was estimated that more than 67 million motorcycles were registered in the country, and approximately 25% of all road traffic deaths were among motorcyclists and their passengers," reports the WHO.

The manual will be implemented in a number of countries over the next two years, starting in the ASEAN region through the Global Road Safety Partnership's GRIS initiative, but extending to cover countries from Africa, Latin

America and the Middle East. In addition to the publication of this manual, WHO has also established a network of experts working to increase helmet use, and supports helmet programs directly in its country work on road safety.

New Stamp Issue Misspells "Motorcycle"

The Postal Service recently, with great fanfare, issued a new set of stamps depicting motorcycles. Collectors who buy copies issued on the first day the stamps are available can get them with a special commemorative postmark. Unfortunately, the colorful postmark issued during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota misspells it "motorcyle."

Having discovered this, the post office announced Friday that new orders for first-day envelopes will have a corrected postmark. Unless the buyer wants it spelled wrong. In that case they can still order the version with the incorrect postmark. Just include a note asking for the incorrect version.

Any collectors who already have misspelled versions can trade them for the corrected version by sending them to Information Fulfillment, Dept 6270, US Postal Service, PO Box 219424, Kansas City, MO 64121-9424 www.aimncom.com