

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate publication



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ETSC report: mandatory ISA to improve motorcycle safety?

The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) published its report on motorcycle safety today. While appreciating that other stakeholders finally consider the importance of motorcycle safety, FEMA believes that the report fails to prioritize recommendations on the most important issue: human behaviour.

The report published today by the ETSC, includes a series of recommendations to improve motorcycle safety. FEMA appreciates this initiative which, for once, really considers motorcycle safety seriously. Among the positive recommendations made is the call for comparable data across Europe taking into consideration the diversity of use of Powered Two Wheelers and the need for better driver education to make them aware of motorcycling characteristics.

However, some of the recommendations, such as Intelligent Speed Assistance, leg protectors, airbags, or calls for mandatory ABS and protective clothing, show a notable lack of knowledge of motorcycling characteristics:

- The ETSC paper calls for *further research in Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) for motorcycles which should be able to restrict acceleration*. However, in many near-miss accident scenarios, the avoiding manoeuvre to be performed is 'accelerating' to avoid the obstacle. Hence, ITS technologies to automate aspects of the riding task compromise motorcycle rider safety.
- The ETSC paper calls for *protective clothing to become mandatory*, once again overlooking the fact that the use of protective jackets, trousers, gloves and boots could be uncomfortable to the extent of being unsafe when weather gets really hot. The positive attributes of personal protective equipment must always be balanced against their negative effects, which ultimately the rider is the only one to know. Personal protective equipment may well have injury-reducing effects when a motorcycle accident occurs, but such equipment does not prevent accidents. In the overall motorcycle safety picture, injury-reducing equipment is of far less importance than accident-prevention initiatives.
- The ETSC paper, though recognising the potential side effects of leg protectors and airbags in terms of safety, recommends *the intensification of research on these matters*. However, because motorcyclists are usually separated from the motorcycle at some time during a crash, FEMA argues that protective equipment attached to the motorcycle is less likely to be effective than protective clothing.

The report focuses too much on technology innovation and by so-doing fails to consider the conclusions of the in-depth studies on motorcycle accident causation - the most important being the Hurt (1981) and MAIDS (2004) reports - which highlight the need to focus on human behaviour. ETSC has fallen into the common trap of calling for new technologies to become mandatory without any check on the real impact of such devices.

FEMA argues that innovative technology, while necessary to be investigated, should not be seen as THE solution to improve motorcycle safety and should always be followed by impact assessment studies and evaluative data collection on real-life use. In its report "A European Agenda for Motorcycle Safety – The motorcyclists' views" (2007), FEMA highlights instead what primary solutions should be implemented to reduce motorcyclists' casualties, among which the following top 3 priorities:

- better road awareness through changing the attitude and behaviour of drivers;
- better rider and driver training;
- better data collection for preventive and evaluative analysis of safety measures

END

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Note to editors:

- ETSC: http://www.etsc.be/documents/Invitation_DraftMotorcycle_30%20April.pdf
- MAIDS Report: <http://www.maids.acembike.org>
- In FEMA's report "A European Agenda for Motorcycle Safety – The motorcyclists' views" (2007) [<http://www.fema.ridersrights.org/docs/EAMS2007.pdf>], European motorcyclists highlight what primary solutions should be implemented to tackle the real causes of motorcycle accidents, among which the following top 3 priorities.

Better awareness

All in-depth studies on motorcycle accidents have found that human factors are the primary accident contributing factor and that vehicle operators are largely responsible for motorcycle accident causation. The MAIDS report shows that over 70% of the car driver errors are due to the failure to perceive motorcyclists. This percentage has been confirmed by several other studies.

- Therefore the focus of accident reduction strategies must first and foremost consider better road awareness through changing the attitude and behaviour of car drivers. Both the theoretical and practical hazard perception test must be overhauled to take into consideration the causes of these accidents and thus, must identify motorcycle awareness as a fundamental part of the testing regime in order to reduce the potential for collisions between cars and motorcycles.
- Practical training for car drivers must include consideration of inattentive blindness at junctions.

Better Training

The *Initial Rider Training programme* [<http://www.initialridertraining.eu>] launched by FEMA and supported by the European Commission and the whole motorcycle sector, provides a complete training scheme, taking into consideration all aspects of rider training, from machine control to hazard awareness, attitude and behaviour.

- The EU Member States need to address training and awareness techniques for motorcycle riders. The present system does not equip them with the necessary skills in terms of accident avoidance, traffic and evasion strategies, as well as appropriate rider attitude and behaviour. This could be easily modified by implementing the *Initial Rider Training programme* into EU Member States' initial rider training curricula.

Better Data Collection

Preventative information - Aviation, Railway and Shipping sectors gather information to analyse near misses in order to understand how to avoid future collisions, the knowledge gained from this type of research in road transport, could have profound positive effects on reducing vehicle collisions.

Casualty and accident statistics - The underlying statistics to determine the 'problem' of casualties and fatalities on our roads are used to promote policy, however the methods of determining casualties needs serious consideration. In the first instance, better reporting and clearer definitions of what constitutes a casualty is required. Also, data are presented differently depending on circumstances and agendas. Absolute casualties or accidents do not consider the proportion of vehicles by category on the road, therefore give distorted results. Furthermore, government statistics on vehicles in circulation differ vastly to the data recorded by industry and this creates further distortions and inaccuracies.

- Accurate data and a realistic universal definition of data are imperative in order to have a clearer understanding of how we can improve road safety.