

NCOM BIKER NEWSBYTES

Compiled & Edited by Bill Bish,
National Coalition of Motorcyclists (NCOM)

MOTORCYCLIST KILLED BY SELF-DRIVING CAR

"A motorcyclist was killed on I-15 in Draper, Utah when a Tesla crashed into the back of the bike," reported Fox13 News in Salt Lake City on July 24, adding that "the driver of the Tesla said he had the 'auto-pilot' setting on...he told police he didn't see the motorcyclist."

"Wow, and even in a driverless vehicle, the 'I didn't see the motorcyclist' gets a rider killed," commented NCOM Board Member Ed Schetter, who recently presented a "We Just Want Our Place on the Road" seminar at the National Coalition of Motorcyclists' NCOM Convention in Nashville that examined the inevitability of driverless cars, relating the impact on motorcycling.

"Such an incident stresses our need to protect our space on the road, as I pointed out in my presentation," said Schetter, a veteran of the auto industry and Executive Director of ABATE of Ohio. "I wonder who the biker's family gets to sue. The Driver? Tesla? The Software Company? Sometimes you just shake your head."

UN SET TO ALLOW INCREASED SPEED FOR AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

The United Nations (UN) is set to allow for an increase in speed for the operation of self-driving vehicles, as well as new tests focused on how well, they can detect motorcycles.

Until now, the speed limit for the autonomous driving of vehicles has been 60kph (@37mph), but that is now set to increase to 130kph (80.7mph) thanks to an amendment to UN Regulation No. 157 adopted by the UNECE's World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations. The amendment also allows for autonomous lane changes, and is set to be implemented from January 2023.

The regulation also states, according to the Federation of European Motorcyclists' Associations (FEMA), that "all tests that need to be conducted for a system like ALKS (Automated Lane Keeping System) or LCP (Lane Change Procedure), have to be carried out with a passenger car target as well as a powered two-wheeler target."

This means that, although the autonomous technology is able to operate at a higher rate of speed, the safety for bikers when approaching an autonomous vehicle should now be improved upon, because their ability to detect motorcycles should (hopefully) be improved.

HONDA DEVELOPING LANE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM FOR THE BIKES OF THE FUTURE

Recent patent filings from Honda for camera- and radar-enabled lane assist for motorcycles across its roster would keep their bikes in-lane via AI.

"Lane assist" is a commonality now in modern cars, but not so common in motorcycles, as electronic aids which detract from the actual riding of the motorcycle for the person holding the handlebars is generally avoided by the manufacturers, who do not want to lose their core enthusiasts, which is also why autonomous technology has not advanced far in the two-wheeled world, especially compared to the much larger automobile market and tech-hungry car culture.

Honda is developing their lane-keeping assist system (LKAS) with the aim of making accidents a thing of the past, but if they are to reach their goal of slashing car and motorcycle deaths by half in the next eight years and bring the number down to zero by 2050, we can expect to see a massive influx of rider-assistance systems like this in the very near future.

The plan combines driver assistance tech with a predictive AI computer system that can spot situations which lead to driving errors before they happen, and is intended to be introduced in the second half of this decade.

Further ahead, the intention is to introduce "Safe and Sound Network Technology" that allows cars, bikes, roadside furniture and even pedestrians (via their phones) to communicate, allowing a server to create a virtual model of traffic movement to predict and prevent accidents before they even start to unfold. The system is scheduled to be phased in from the 2030s.

THE UK WANTS TO BAN THE SALE OF NEW FOSSIL FUELED MOTORCYCLES

The government of the United Kingdom has launched an open consultation, called "L-category vehicles: ending sales of new non-zero emission models," in which they announce a sales ban for new non-zero emission motorcycles from 2035: "It is important that motorcycles do not remain fossil fueled as the rest of the transport fleet cleans up," states Trudy Harrison MP, Minister of State for Transport.

'L-category' vehicles include 2- and 3-wheeled mopeds, motorcycles, trikes, sidecar-equipped motorbikes, and quadricycles, and in the consult the government clearly states: "While cars and vans vastly outnumber motorcycles on UK roads, motorcycles are an important and sizeable vehicle population, with 1.3 million currently licensed in 2021. We do not want to see them remaining fossil-fueled as the rest of our vehicles clean up."

The British government has already committed to phasing out new cars and vans that run solely on petrol or diesel by 2030, and all new non-zero emission road vehicles by 2040.

Jim Freeman, Chairman of the British Motorcyclists Federation (BMF) said: "The BMF will oppose any proposals to ban the use of motorcycles powered by internal combustion engines while such vehicles are still capable of being run. We also oppose a ban on the sale of new internal combustion engine-powered motorcycles while there is the possibility of providing alternatives to fossil fuel and while the electric vehicle charging infrastructure does not adequately support electric motorcycles."

JURY ACQUITS TRUCKER CHARGED WITH SEVEN-COUNT MOTORCYCLE HOMICIDE

On the morning of June 21, 2019, truck-driver Volodymyr Zhukovskyy admitted to driving under the influence of fentanyl, heroin and cocaine before crashing his 2016 Dodge Ram 2500 Tradesman crew-cab pickup into a pack of Marine Corps veterans riding their motorcycles near Randolph, New Hampshire, killing seven members of the Jarheads Motorcycle Club.

Prosecutors argued that Zhukovskyy, who had previous DUI convictions and should have had his license suspended, repeatedly swerved back and forth before the collision and told police he caused it. But the judge dismissed eight charges related to whether he was impaired, based on a contested blood test, and his defense attorneys blamed the lead biker for causing the accident, claiming that "he was drunk and not looking where he was going when he lost control of his motorcycle and slid in front of Zhukovskyy's truck."

Following a 2-week trial, jurors deliberated for less than three hours before finding Zhukovskyy, 26, innocent on seven counts of manslaughter, seven counts of negligent homicide and one count of reckless conduct, setting him free after being held in custody since the accident.

This high-profile case has garnered staggering coverage across the country, and the surprising verdict has been soundly criticized by many, including New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu (R) who said he shares in the "shock, outrage, and anger that so many have expressed" since the crash. "The Fallen Seven did not receive justice today, and that is an absolute tragedy," Gov. Sununu stated.

New Hampshire Attorney General John Formella said he believes the state proved its case. "Mr. Zhukovskyy should have been found guilty of the charges in this case and held responsible for causing seven deaths and numerous injuries," he said. "We thank the Court and the jurors for their service, and while we are extremely disappointed, we respect the verdict and our system of justice."

PETITION CALLS FOR PROPER PUNISHMENT FOR BIKE THIEVES

A petition has been launched on the Change.org website calling for tougher sentences for bike thieves. The petition was started by British biker, Xander James from Hull, U.K., and has already amassed thousands of signatures -- enough to draw attention of local news.

"As we know, motorcycle & vehicle theft is the highest it's ever been, this is partly due to the minimal sentences from the Crown Prosecution Service," explains James on his petition to the U.K. Parliament and Scotland Yard. "We need change. We can't safely park our vehicles outside our own homes anymore! But with the Crown Prosecution Service handing out cautions & early release they keep doing it."

Along with tougher sentencing, James wants to see Operation Yellowfin receive more support from the Government, a police operational initiative which was launched locally in 2018 to tackle motorcycle crime and anti-social behavior.

STURGIS TRAFFIC DOWN, BUT STILL HIGHER THAN AVERAGE

The good news is the Department of Transportation counted over half a million vehicles entering Sturgis, South Dakota during the 82nd annual Black Hills Motorcycle Rally week, but the bad news; that's down 4.4% from last year.

The city of Sturgis estimated the 2021 attendance at 555,000. Although down from 2021, the 2022 total vehicle count is still higher than the five-year average of 492,535.

Sturgis City Manager Daniel Ainslie told the Black Hills Pioneer that 2021 was far better than expected because people had been in lockdown during the pandemic and just wanted to get out and travel. "It was a significant Rally last year. It was actually the largest Rally we had other than the 75th for more than a decade," he said. "Given that last year was such a large Rally, it's not unexpected that numbers are down."

Some worried initially that gas prices -- which hovered near \$5 a gallon mid-summer -- might have deterred people from attending this year's Rally, but according to Ainslie; "With a lot of individuals that come here, no matter what, they're going to be coming. But I think they are being a little more careful with what they are spending."

BONNEVILLE MOTORCYCLE SPEED TRIALS CANCELED DUE TO FLOODING

On August 13, 2022, the Bonneville Motorcycle Speed Trials organizers officially announced that the 2022 event is canceled. This year's speed trials had originally been scheduled to take place from August 28 through September 1, 2022, but due to flooding on the Bonneville Salt Flats, the BMST, FIM Land Speed World Records, and AMA Land Speed Grand Championship is officially canceled for 2022.

Heavy storm systems brought flooding to the salt flats, and when organizers did an aerial assessment of the state of the standard track area on August 12, they found that "the entire length of our tracks and beyond are flooded," and noted that "Although the area is drying, it is unfortunately, not drying quickly enough for the event to take place."

GWRRA CALLS IT QUILTS

Putting down their kickstand for good, the Gold Wing Road Riders Association (GWRRA) is waving farewell after 45 years of meeting the nicest people, and ceased operations following this year's Wing Ding 43 in Shreveport, Louisiana at the end of July.

Founded in 1977 with the motto, "Friends for Fun, Safety and Knowledge," the GWRRA called itself, "the world's largest single-marque social organization for owners of Honda Gold Wing/Valkyrie motorcycles" that once boasted nearly 80,000 members across 53 countries, with 800-plus chapters staffed by 4,000 volunteer leaders.

GWRRA Founders Paul Hildebrand and Shirley Stevens-Garcia made good on the '60s era ad slogan "You meet the nicest people on a Honda" by creating a non-profit, non-religious, non-political organization "that advocated for rider education and safety, motorist awareness, and leadership training."

SAVE THE DATE - 2023 NCOM CONVENTION IN PHOENIX

Next year's 38th annual NCOM Convention is now scheduled for Father's Day weekend, June 16-18, 2023, in Phoenix, Arizona, so plan ahead to join with hundreds of like-minded bikers' rights activists from across the country for a weekend of learning, sharing and camaraderie!

Concerned advocates from the ranks of Motorcycle Rights Organizations (MROs), clubs (Confederations of Clubs) and independent riders will gather together for the betterment of biking, with agenda items dealing with legal and legislative issues, so check back at www.ON-A-BIKE.com for further details from the National Coalition of Motorcyclists as they are announced.

QUOTABLE QUOTE: "But where, says some, is the king of America? I'll tell you. . . . let a crown be placed . . . , by which the world may know, . . . that in America the law is king. For in absolute governments, the king is the law, so in free countries, the law ought to be king, and there ought to be no other . . ." ~ Thomas Paine (1776), Patriot