

NCOM BIKER NEWSBYTES

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CONGRESS REQUIRES NHTSA TO FORCE AUTOMAKERS TO MONITOR DRIVERS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has announced that roadway deaths in the U.S. are at crisis levels, on pace to exceed the 42,915 fatalities in 2021, the greatest number in 16 years, as Americans returned to the road following pandemic stay-at-home orders.

With alcohol-related crashes being a leading cause of highway deaths in the U.S., the National Transportation Safety Board is now recommending that all new vehicles in the U.S. be required to have blood alcohol monitoring systems that can stop an intoxicated person from driving.

The NTSB's recommendation also calls for systems to monitor a driver's behavior, making sure they're alert.

Under President Biden's infrastructure law, Congress required NHTSA to make automakers install alcohol monitoring systems within three years. The legislation doesn't specify the technology, only that it must "passively monitor" a driver to determine if they are impaired.

NHTSA and a group of 16 automakers have been jointly funding research on alcohol monitoring since 2008, and has hired a Swedish company to research technology that would automatically test a driver's breath for alcohol and stop a vehicle from moving if the driver is impaired.

Another company is working on light technology that could test for blood alcohol in a person's finger by touch. Many cars now have cameras pointed at the driver, which have the potential to limit impaired driving.

In 2020, the most recent figures available, 11,654 people died in alcohol-related crashes, according to NHTSA data. That's about 30% of all U.S. traffic deaths, and a 14% increase over 2019 figures, the last full year before the coronavirus pandemic, the NTSB said.

Once the technology is ready to be implemented in automakers' new models, near the end of 2024, it will take years for it to be in most of the roughly 280 million vehicles on U.S. roads.

BEST/WORST DRIVERS IN THE U.S.

Everyone seems to think their state has the best (or worst) drivers in America, but quotewizard.com dove into the data to determine, based on their criteria, which states actually do have the Best and the Worst Drivers traveling their roadways.

Drivers were evaluated on four factors to determine overall driving quality: accidents, speeding tickets, DUIs, and citations. States that are considered the worst had the highest numbers of driving incidents, while states with the lowest numbers of incidents are considered the best.

After analyzing over 10 million insurance quotes to find out where the best and worst drivers reside, it was determined that the Five Best States were 1) Connecticut, 2) Michigan, 3) West Virginia, 4) Delaware and 5) Arkansas, while the Five Worst States were 50) Utah, 49) California, 48) Iowa, 47) Wisconsin and 46) Ohio.

Among those in the top five, Connecticut ranks best in citations and DUIs, while among the bottom five, Utah ranked worst in speeding, second worst in citations, fifth in accidents and 8th in DUIs. For more rankings in each category, visit

[https://urldefense.com/v3/_http://www.quotewizard.com_:_!!Eb2IA6X1TUGobEE!0IUfJTiK1LMI_ZMNL92Pu5f84YOf44FPa433edGzVDEcypIFZWI_Vdrj2EcYw-IWEwh-kEW-2H6GelIAlpjI51C-I_kkrfVNgCg\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_http://www.quotewizard.com_:_!!Eb2IA6X1TUGobEE!0IUfJTiK1LMI_ZMNL92Pu5f84YOf44FPa433edGzVDEcypIFZWI_Vdrj2EcYw-IWEwh-kEW-2H6GelIAlpjI51C-I_kkrfVNgCg$).

UNVACCINATED AT HIGHER RISK OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

If you passed on getting the COVID vaccine, you might be more likely to get into a car crash. Or at least those are the findings of a new study published in The American Journal of Medicine. During the summer of 2021, Canadian researchers examined the encrypted government-held records of more than 11 million adults, 16% of whom hadn't received the COVID vaccine.

They found that the unvaccinated people were 72% more likely to be involved in a severe traffic crash -- in which at least one person was transported to the hospital -- than those who were vaccinated. That's similar to the increased risk of car crashes for people with sleep apnea, though only about half that of people who abuse alcohol, researchers found.

Of course, skipping a COVID vaccine does not mean that someone will get into a car crash. Instead, the authors theorize that people who resist public health recommendations might also "neglect basic road safety guidelines."

The findings are significant enough that primary care doctors should consider counseling unvaccinated patients on traffic safety -- and insurance companies might base changes to insurance policies on vaccination data -- the authors suggest.

This isn't the first time that researchers have examined the link between behavior and vaccination status, as a 2021 study published in the Journal of Bioeconomics found a correlation between self-reported risky driving and having skipped their flu vaccine.

THE ROAD TO DECARBONIZATION

Decarbonization Is The Goal, But What's The Best Way To Get There? The European Association of Motorcycle Manufacturers (ACEM) wants to take multiple approaches.

On December 6, 2022, the ACEM hosted a panel discussion about its vision for decarbonization. Although the discussion's stated intention was to talk about how the industry plans to address a multitude of sustainability issues as we all progress toward the year 2030, what it evolved into was a spirited debate about the comparative merits of the evolution of combustion engines (such as with so-called e-fuels and hydrogen) and electrification.

While all panelists of course had their own points of view, the general consensus seemed to be that lowering emissions is a goal we must all work toward, but that putting all the industry's technological eggs into one metaphorical basket isn't a good idea, for a number of reasons.

From a technological perspective, electric motorbikes currently work best for low-voltage urban mobility, not high-speed, long-distance leisure pursuits. That's where the debate about e-fuels (or synthetic fuels) and hydrogen come into play, because both those means of fueling mobility can potentially offer the benefits of long-distance, high-speed travel on motorbikes.

Infrastructure is also a major concern -- fast-charging and swappable batteries require additional infrastructure investments that are both extensive and expensive, while e-fuels can theoretically make use of existing traditional fuel infrastructure.

When discussing decarbonization, the tendency is to think about emissions in terms of tailpipes, but considerations about how the raw materials to build either combustion or electric vehicles are sourced, assembled, and delivered to customers should also be part of the conversation.

Additionally, concerns about diversifying the industry's approach to decarbonization were strongly expressed, with the global pandemic shining a bright light on the pitfalls of overly concentrating parts of supply chains in a given geographical area. The current European energy crisis and ongoing Russian war make calls to diversify energy sources (and resources) all too clear.

How this will all evolve is difficult to predict, but strong calls for "technology neutrality" as the industry moves toward decarbonization were echoed up and down the panel.

EUROPEAN MOTORCYCLE GROUP CALLS TO MAKE MOTORCYCLING AFFORDABLE

With inflation worries and cost of living increases, the Federation of European Motorcycle Associations (FEMA) sees bikes as valuable transport tools and has issued an impassioned plea for motorcycle affordability. In particular, FEMA spelled out their position on keeping motorcycle taxes reasonable, as well as taking other measures to encourage motorbike ridership as a viable form of everyday transport.

FEMA believes that motorcycles can be a strong tool in the fight against transport poverty. As the name suggests, that's when the cost of transportation to simply live your life (get to and from work and/or school) is prohibitively expensive.

Moto commuting is a way of life for all kinds of everyday people in many countries, and is highly valued for its practicality, and that's why FEMA encourages governmental and legislative bodies to do what they can to encourage ridership. For example, taxes on motorbikes should be lower than those found on cars, because they're smaller and lighter in weight, and they cause less wear and tear on public roadways.

Similarly, FEMA also discourages restrictions on motorbikes in urban city centers when they're ideal vehicles for getting around congested city streets, and can help reduce traffic if more people are encouraged to choose bikes over cars.

Bicycles and e-bikes have their place -- but so do motorbikes, and FEMA wants to see more legislative encouragement of moto commuting as a way to combat multiple transport problems across Europe.

FIRST HONDA 'ELECTRIC MOTORCYCLE' ON PARADE

Art imitates life, and sometimes, life imitates art, which may be the case with Honda's latest parade float, which they designed to lead the 134th annual Rose Parade in 2023, featuring electric vehicles including "a Honda electric motorcycle."

The overall float design, which Honda has titled "Forever Determined," represents Honda's current (pun intended) emissions-lowering initiative, across all of its many and various vehicular segments; Honda's first all-electric SUV, the electrified Acura ARX-06 race machine, a HondaJet Elite II aircraft, the Honda eVTOL concept vehicle, and an unspecified 'motorcycle'.

Remember, Honda aims to achieve total carbon neutrality across the company by 2050, as well as get 100 percent of its new vehicle sales in North America to be all electric by 2040.

While Team Red has introduced electric scooters and trikes in other markets, so far it has yet to introduce its first electric motorcycle anywhere -- no road bikes, no dirt bikes, no electric bike concepts -- nothing yet, until maybe January 2 in Pasadena...everybody loves a parade!

YAMAHA GOES 'GREEN' WITH PLANT-BASED MATERIALS FOR FUTURE BIKE DESIGNS

On November 17, 2022, Yamaha Marine announced that it will begin using certain parts in some 2024 personal watercraft and sport boat engines that are made from a new material. It's a plant-derived, cellulose nanofiber-reinforced resin product, and in Yamaha's own words; "Yamaha Motor is examining the utilization of CNF reinforced resin not only in marine products but also in motorcycles and a wide range of other products in the future."

Cellulose nanofiber "is made from wood-derived fiber (pulp) that has been micro-refined to the nano level of several hundredths of a micron and smaller, cellulose nanofiber is the world's most advanced biomass material."

Their definition goes on to state that "because CNF is derived from plant fibers, the environmental impact from production and disposal is low. Due to its light-weight characteristics, the modulus of elasticity has the same level of strength as that of aramid fiber, which is known as a high-strength fiber, and has thermal expansion on par with glass. CNF also has excellent gas barrier properties against oxygen."

ROMANIAN MOTORCYCLISTS OBLIGATED TO CARRY FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

And here's why we need Motorcyclists Rights Organizations (MROs) at every level, from local to international; In the European country of Romania the highway code does not distinguish between cars and motorcycles, so as a result, a motorcycle must carry a fire extinguisher, a first aid kit and two reflective triangles, just like a car.

Romanian motorcyclists' organization MotoADN played a significant role in the political process to end this obligation by launching a petition requesting the Romanian Parliament, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of the Interior to exclude motorcycles and mopeds.

The petition gathered more than 8,000 signatures in just a few days, and the end result is that a draft law that provides for the elimination of the obligation for motorcyclists to have a fire extinguisher, reflective triangles and a first aid kit was recently approved by the Senate.

QUOTABLE QUOTE: *"The only Zen you find on the tops of mountains is the Zen you bring up there."* ~ Robert M. Pirsig (1928-2017), author of 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance'