

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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INSTITUTE CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO MANDATE ANTILOCK BRAKES FOR ALL NEW MOTORCYCLES

ARLINGTON, VA — Recent research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety strongly demonstrates the benefits of antilock brakes for motorcycles. Based on findings that antilocks significantly reduce motorcycle crashes, including fatal ones by more than a third, the Institute is seeking a federal requirement that manufacturers equip all new motorcycles with this technology.

"The best motorcycle crash is one that never happens," says Institute president Adrian Lund. "Traveling on 2 wheels instead of 4 is always riskier, but our new research shows that antilock brake technology can make motorcycle riding a much safer way to get around."

Stopping a motorcycle is trickier than stopping a car. For one thing, the front and rear wheels typically have separate brake controls. In an emergency, a rider faces split-second choices about which wheels to brake and how hard. If the brakes are applied too hard, the wheels can lock and cause an overturn. If the brakes are applied too gently, the rider risks colliding with the obstacle. This is when antilocks can help by reducing brake pressure when they detect impending lockup and then increasing the pressure again when traction is restored. Brake pressure is evaluated multiple times per second, so riders may brake fully without fear of locking up. Antilocks won't prevent every motorcycle crash. They won't help a rider about to be struck from behind, for example. But the new studies released in March indicate that antilocks reduce crashes overall and save lives.

Institute researchers compared the fatal crash experience of antilock-equipped motorcycles against their nonantilock counterparts during 2003-08. The main finding is that motorcycles with antilocks versus without are 37 percent less likely to be in fatal crashes per 10,000 registered vehicle years. Bolstering this finding is a separate analysis by the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI), an affiliate of the Insurance Institute. HLDI analyzed insurance claims filed for crash damage to

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motorcycles. Bike models with antilocks have 22 percent fewer claims for crash damage per insured vehicle year (a vehicle year is 1 vehicle insured for 1 year, 2 insured for 6 months, etc.) than the same models without antilocks. The results update earlier studies by the Institute and HLDI published in 2008.

In 2009 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced that it was looking at the issue in light of the Institute's earlier study but stated that "an additional year of data and additional analyses are needed to determine the statistical significance of the results."

Now the 2 recent studies from the Institute and HLDI provide more "compelling evidence that antilocks reduce fatal crash risk and lower insurance losses," says Lund. "NHTSA has what it needs to move forward with a regulation."

Crash avoidance technology like motorcycle antilocks is especially important because more people are taking up riding and more are dying in crashes. Rider deaths topped 5,000 in 2008 – more than in any year since the federal government began collecting fatal crash data in 1975. Although preliminary reports indicate that deaths declined in 2009, the upward trend in recent years comes amid record lows for passenger vehicle occupant deaths, prompting the Institute and HLDI to look harder at measures to stem motorcyclist deaths.

**End 2-page news release on call for motorcycle ABS mandate
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