

MRF ATTENDS MOTORCYCLE SAFETY NETWORK MEETING IN WASHINGTON – HORSEPOWER IS BAD?

Recently the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) held the spring meeting of the Motorcycle Safety Network. The Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) has been a regular participant in this meeting since its inception over five years ago. This meeting was also attended by the American Motorcyclist Association, Motorcycle Safety Foundation, Motorcycle Industry Council, Harley Davidson, American Honda, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, National Association of State Motorcycle Safety Administrators, Accident Scene Management Inc, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Highway Insurance Data Institute, and just about every transportation-related government entity. The all-day meeting covered just about every aspect of motorcycle safety.

Early predictions by government statisticians are claiming that overall traffic fatality numbers for 2009 will be down almost 10 percent over 2008. There is no breakout for motorcycles yet, but one thing is sure to be true; simple math demonstrates that each year that we have more motorcycles on the road than the previous year, we can expect the fatality and injury numbers to rise accordingly.

No real update was available on the federally-funded motorcycle crash study. Although the feds continue to defend the reduction of the sample size from 1200 to 300 crashes as “statistically sound,” we at the MRF call into question the end result of such a small number of samples. The recently-concluded pilot study report is due out this May.

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) gave a lengthy multimedia presentation on their goings on. First off, they are going global with plans to pitch or implement their training curricula in Italy, Germany, Jordan, Israel and China. The most noteworthy progress is being made in Jordan, where up until the adoption of the MSF course, only the King and his friends could ride motorcycles! The MSF had to write new sections of the class to incorporate sand and gravel roads because in some parts of the country the pavement just stops.

Also announced at the meeting was the MSF’s plan to withhold the \$3 million they were going to donate to the federal crash study and instead do their own study. They rolled out plans to partner with the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute to do a study using cameras and instrumentation mounted on numerous bikes for 6-18 months. The idea is to see what riders are doing to avoid crashes instead of the feds’ approach of waiting for a crash and then going to see what happened. It’s a laudable effort by the MSF, and the MRF supports them in what is likely to be the world’s first large-scale naturalistic motorcycle riding study.

The MSF also rolled out information on a few new classes that will be available. First is the CORE class - a single afternoon class designed for returning riders, or for people who know the basics and can keep a bike up but just need a little more polish. The second is a set of actual road classes that have an instructor student ration of 3-1 or 4-2. They ride in 15-minute bursts through various locales, with a blackboard session before and after each ride.

The insurance industry had multiple representatives to announce their publication entitled “Riding is Risky Fun,” which came out on the day of the meeting. From the incredibly biased title to the bunk

statistics churned out by the insurance industry, the whole publication has little, if any, factual base. The only people who could believe the pamphlet are its authors. As expected, the insurance industry continues to pile on the garbage rhetoric of motorcycle crashes being so much more expensive than auto crashes. For instance, their hired guns insist that rider education fails to reduce motorcycle crashes, and that having ABS reduces your chances of crashing by 37 percent.

The report largely focuses on the super sport bike, which the insurance industry has been trying to all-out ban for decades. "Horsepower is bad; cheap horsepower is even worse" was the phrase that the insurance industry kept using throughout their presentation. We here at the MRF could not disagree more. You can read the whole concocted publication on their website, <http://www.iihs.org/externaldata/srdata/docs/sr4503.pdf>

The Marine Corps ended the day on positive note by rebuking the insurance industry's notion that rider education does not work. The Corps has seen their motorcycle fatalities reduced by half over the last year, and they give all the credit to their rider education program. Hats off to the Corps for doing its best to keep our mean, green, fighting marines in shape!

SAVE THE DATE! Don't forget May 20th will be the MRF's second Michael "Boz" Kerr Bikers in the Beltway Motorcycle Awareness and Lobby Day. The MRF has secure, free motorcycle parking just steps from the Nation's Capitol. Ride to DC for what is sure to be a spectacular event.