
INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Adrian Lund 703/247-1500 (office) or 703/898-6618 (cell)

Russ Rader 703/247-1500 (office) or 202/257-3591 (cell)

NEW BROCHURE ON MOTORCYCLE ANTILOCK BRAKES PROVIDES KEY SAFETY INFORMATION FOR RIDERS

ARLINGTON, VA — Riding a motorcycle is safer when the bike is equipped with antilock brakes, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety explains in a new consumer brochure.

"Motorcycle ABS: Why you want to ride with it" explains what antilock braking systems (ABS) do, how they work, and the key research on their safety benefits. The pamphlet, intended for distribution at rider training events and other venues, is meant to encourage riders shopping for new bikes to choose models equipped with the technology. Antilocks are standard on some motorcycles and are available as an option on many more.

"Research shows that motorcycle antilocks dramatically cut the risk of a deadly crash," says Institute president Adrian Lund. "We want riders to understand how this technology works so they can make an informed choice."

Braking isn't as simple on a motorcycle as it is behind the wheel of a car. Most bikes have separate brake controls for the front and rear wheels, and either wheel can lock up during hard braking. On a car, a lockup might result in a skid. On a motorcycle, it can mean a loss of balance and a potentially deadly fall.

With ABS, a rider can brake fully without fear of locking up. The system automatically reduces brake pressure when a lockup is about to occur and increases it again after traction is restored.

ABS works by constantly measuring wheel speed, but it intervenes to adjust brake pressure only if it detects that a wheel is about to stop rotating. A rider shouldn't notice it at all during normal, nonemergency braking.

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Motorcycles equipped with antilock brakes have a 37 percent lower rate of fatal crashes than the same models without antilocks, Institute researchers have found. The Institute's affiliate, the Highway Loss Data Institute, has reported that collision insurance claims are filed 22 percent less frequently for motorcycles with antilocks than for those without it.

The technology benefits riders of all abilities. Even the most skilled rider may be forced to brake hard when cut off or faced with another emergency. Road surfaces can be unexpectedly sandy or more slippery than they look. A test track study by the Austrian Road Safety Board found that both new and experienced riders stop more quickly with ABS than without. The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that stopping distances improve with ABS on wet and dry surfaces alike.

More than 4,000 people died in motorcycle crashes in 2009. Riding a motorcycle is inherently more dangerous than riding in a car because a bike is less stable and less visible to other drivers. Moreover, it lacks the protection of an enclosed vehicle. Antilocks can go a long way toward preventing crashes. When a crash does occur, a helmet is the most effective protection.

To request copies of "Motorcycle ABS: Why you want to ride with it," email publications@iihs.org.

End 2-page news release on motorcycle antilocks
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