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## NEWS & NOTES

American Motorcyclist Association

August 2006

**The National Transportation Safety Board** will hold a two-day public forum on motorcycle safety beginning on Tuesday, September 12, 2006 in Washington, DC. Board Member Debbie Hersman will preside as Chair of the forum.

Last year, 4,315 motorcyclists died in crashes and the rate of motorcycle fatalities has increased more than 25 percent since 1997. "At a time when highway fatalities have been decreasing, motorcycle fatalities have continued to increase, both in overall number and in fatality rate," said Member Hersman.

The goal of the public forum is to gather information about ongoing motorcycle safety research and initiatives, as well as safety countermeasures that may reduce the likelihood of motorcycle accidents and fatalities."

During the forum, the NTSB will examine issues raised by a number of recent motorcycle accidents, including the June 12 motorcycle crash involving Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, and the June 11 crash involving a motorcycle and a minivan in Williamsport, PA that killed five persons.

NTSB staff will lead technical panel discussions that will examine each major aspect of motorcycle safety, including rider training and licensing, rider protective equipment, vehicle design, and public education of motorists and motorcyclists. Representatives from the motorcycle industry, government, and motorcycling organizations will be invited to give presentations highlighting their perspectives.

The forum will be held in Washington at the NTSB's Board Room and Conference Center, 429 L'Enfant Plaza, SW. An agenda for the forum will be posted on the NTSB's website when available. The general public will be able to observe the forum either in person or by webcast at [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov).

**A Vermont** sheriff whose officers improperly shut down a dual-sport ride nearly two years ago is back in the news and out of office.

Windham County Sheriff Sheila Prue pleaded guilty to embezzlement in court and submitted her resignation on June 23. The charges were unrelated to the events of August 8, 2004, when Prue's deputies threatened to arrest riders in the Red Fox Turkey Run.

In that incident, deputies told riders they would be arrested and their motorcycles confiscated, even if they rode fully licensed street-legal motorcycles on public roads.

The decision to halt the dual-sport ride became a big controversy among New England riders. An investigation by the Vermont State Attorney General concluded that sheriff's deputies were wrong to stop the event.

**The Philippines** Supreme Court (SC) has ordered motorcycles of all types and sizes to keep off the North and South Luzon expressways after it affirmed the validity of an administrative order of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) prohibiting motorcycles from using the expressways. These expressways are the major corridors for travel through the largest of the Philippine Islands.

**New York** State Department of Motor Vehicles has completed a new 30-second TV public service announcement on motorcycle awareness.

Newly appointed New York DMV Commissioner Nancy Naples appears on the sidewalk after a graphic car/motorcycle right of way violation, telling viewers, "Motorcycle accidents aren't accidents at all, too many are crashes caused by inattentive drivers who just pull into oncoming traffic with little more than a glance. I'm DMV Commissioner Nancy Naples, asking you to please watch for motorcycles."

Assistant Commissioner for Transportation Safety Rob Dingman spearheaded the video. Dingman's name may be familiar to many readers of AMA Rights News & Notes because he is the former AMA Washington Representative.

The 15-second ad is found at [http://nysdmv.com/media/gtsc\\_6\\_8\\_15s\\_720.MPG](http://nysdmv.com/media/gtsc_6_8_15s_720.MPG) and the 30-second version is at [http://nysdmv.com/media/GTSC\\_6\\_5\\_4\\_PM.MPG](http://nysdmv.com/media/GTSC_6_5_4_PM.MPG). The ads will be distributed statewide through the New York State Broadcasters Association and are scheduled to run throughout the summer months.

In addition, Governor Pataki is now considering A4914 which passed both houses of the legislature and is awaiting his signature. This legislation is consistent with the AMA Justice for All Campaign which is focused on inadequate sentencing of drivers who seriously injure or kill others on the road. Learn more at [www.AMADirectlink.com](http://www.AMADirectlink.com).

**Representatives of the Massachusetts** Motorcycle Association (MMA) and the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) recently joined Turnpike Authority Chairman Matthew J. Amorello, announcing there were no reported motorcycle fatalities on major roads leading into and out of New Hampshire during the three weeks surrounding Laconia Bike Week despite New Hampshire officials reporting nine motorcycle fatalities during the same period.

The Turnpike Authority posted large signs on over 45 toll booths reading, "When changing lanes, check for motorcycles." The MassHighway Department had 10-20 flashing signs with the same message during the past three weeks. Funding for the awareness campaign came from a Motorcycle Safety Program where \$2 of each annual motorcycle registration funds these type programs and rider education.

This was the fourth year the MMA worked with State Officials in targeting the Laconia Bike Week period for greater motorists awareness. The MMA has been invited to submit additional plans for motorcycle safety to the MassHighway Strategic Plan, and the Executive Office of Transportation's 20-year Plan.

**US Dept. of Agriculture** Secretary Mike Johanns recently approved petitions from North Carolina Governor Mike Easley, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, and Virginia Governor Tim Kaine to develop state-specific rules for managing roadless areas in the three states. The three petitions were recently reviewed by the 13-member Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee, established by Johanns to provide advice and recommendations on implementing the State Petitions for Inventoried Roadless Area Management Rule.

The US Forest Service will now work with North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia to develop and publish proposed state-specific rules that address the management requirements set forth in the petitions. The state-specific rulemaking process will include any required National Environmental Policy Act analysis and invite public input during a notice and comment period. USDA will make the determination on the adoption of any final federal rule.

The State Petitions for Inventoried Roadless Area Management Rule was adopted by USDA in May 2005 and established a process to provide governors an opportunity to establish or adjust management requirements for National Forest System inventoried roadless areas within their states. For more information, visit [www.roadless.fs.fed.us](http://www.roadless.fs.fed.us).

**The All-Terrain Vehicle Association** (ATVA) has earned a major victory in its effort to convince federal safety experts that young riders should be allowed to ride ATVs that are the proper size for the child's body.

In testimony to the Consumer Product Safety Commission over the past several years, the ATVA argued that current CPSC age guidelines limiting children under 16 to small ATVs prevented or discouraged youth from getting ATV-riding training.

In late May, the CPSC staff made recommendations to the full board to improve ATV safety nationwide, including rewriting the restrictive age guidelines "so that children under the age of 16 can ride and be trained on ATVs which are more likely to fit them physically and which conform to their developmental capabilities."

The staff report notes that formal training may reduce an ATV rider's risk of injury by half. Besides suggesting changes in the CPSC's age guidelines, the staff recommends that all ATV buyers be given free safety training and information, and that smaller machines for use by riders under 16 should have automatic transmissions and speed limiters. ATVs for children ages 6 to 11 would have speed limits of 10 mph, while machines for children 12 to 15 would be limited to 15 mph. The staff also recommends that ATVs sold in the United States should conform to uniform mechanical requirements for such things as brakes, suspension, controls and lighting.

This proposed rule-making is the result of a petition submitted to the CPSC by the Consumer Federation of America and other groups that called for the CPSC to ban the sale of full-size ATVs for use by children under the age of 16.

That potential ban has been opposed by the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) and ATVA who testified in a commission hearing on the issue. Rather than a blanket ban on the sale of ATVs for use by kids, the ATVA supports a

more thoughtful approach that includes greater parental involvement.

**West Virginia** again leads the United States in ATV deaths. So the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority (HMRRA) has initiated an ATV safety campaign, working with trail permit vendors to help curb illegal riding in the area.

Hatfield-McCoy is working with its licensed outfitters and permit vendors to help stop the influx of non-licensed trail guides leading riders, and of people pointing out ways to access the trail system illegally. Vendors caught leading riders on illegal access trails will have their advertising and permit licenses with the trail system revoked.

In addition to increasing trail patrols and enforcement in illegal riding trouble spots, the HMRRA Ranger staff is teaching an ATV safety course and has initiated an elementary school education program. Hatfield-McCoy teamed up with the ATV Safety Institute (ASI) and the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC) to deliver the message in ways that are both fun and educational.

The ATV safety course is offered by the trail system on weekends throughout the year, and many manufacturers will pay for the course if you've just purchased a new machine. The course typically takes a couple of hours, and riders learn everything from basic safety information to advanced techniques for riding over obstacles.

For any questions about the Hatfield-McCoy Trail rules and regulations or ATV Safety Course information, you can visit [www.TrailsHeaven.com](http://www.TrailsHeaven.com) or call them at 1-800-592-2217.

**Canadian** insurance officials in Quebec would like to see a ban on sportbikes larger than 400cc. John Harbour, director of the Quebec Automobile Insurance Company, says sportbikes should be banned because they result in large insurance losses.

Harbour's comments are reminiscent of a proposal promoted by the US Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in the late 1980s that could have resulted in a ban on sportbikes in this country. At the time, the AMA was able to defeat that proposal, eventually succeeding in getting a US senator to abandon support for the ban he had introduced in Congress.

**The US Forest Service** is deciding where you can ride through a nationwide effort. About a year ago, the U.S. Forest Service announced a new rule to guide recreational motor vehicle use in national forests and grasslands nationwide. The new travel management policy requires each national forest and grassland to identify and designate the roads, trails and areas that are open to motor vehicle use. Even unplanned, user-created trails are supposed to be considered in this new effort.

The Forest Service expects that it will take up to four years to complete the designation process for all 155 forests and 20 grasslands in the nation. Once the designations are made, each forest or grassland is supposed to publish a motor vehicle use map that shows the legal routes to ride. Motor vehicle use off these routes and outside these areas--what is known as cross-country travel--will be illegal.

The Forest Service released a schedule for the national forests and grasslands nationwide to designate the roads, trails and areas that will allow motor vehicles. The forest and grasslands officials are taking public comment on the designation of routes, so it's up to you to be sure you submit comments, or attend public meetings. You can find out more about the schedule for designating routes in your area by contacting your nearest national forest or grassland, or going to the US Forest Service website.

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AMA Government Relations *News & Notes* is a monthly service compiled and edited by the AMA Government Relations Staff to keep motorcyclists informed of happenings around the world. We welcome your news & views. Please submit all material to Terry Lee Cook, Grassroots Manager, 13515 Yarmouth Drive, Pickerington, OH 43147; fax 614-856-1920 or e-mail to [tcook@ama-cycle.org](mailto:tcook@ama-cycle.org).