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The Engineering Institute Newsletter

May 2011: Newsletter

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NHTSA Motorcycle Safety Awareness Campaign

In last month's newsletter, we introduced Jan Sallings' custom-built motorcycle. Even with its unique features, the motorcycle is considered a vehicle. Like vehicles on roadways, motorcycles are

Motorcycle Safety

To promote the importance of motorcycle safety, NHTSA has declared the month of May as [Motorcycle Awareness Month](#). As fuel prices continue to reach an all-time high many commuters, to ease the pain at the gas pumps, are riding their motorcycles. With the combination of passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, and motorcycles, commuters have an enormous responsibility to be vigilant drivers: first, by respecting each other, and second, by obeying road.



Jan Sallings' Custom B

NHTSA recommends several safety measures for motorist and stay safe on the roadways. For example, compared to a passenger vehicle, a motorcycle can stop quicker; therefore, motorists should never tailgate a motorcycle closely. In addition, this should be understood, leave the glove box. Some states have passed state laws banning either cell phones while driving, or texting while driving. Moreover, distracted driving includes several other elements; such as fidgeting with the vehicle's controls or gadgets or focusing on the passengers in the backseat. The best way to avoid an accident is never drive while distracted. Of course, motorists have a responsibility to do their part in keeping the roadways safe for themselves, but for other drivers as well.

governed by the same rules and privileges.



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In addition, motorcyclists must always use signals when making turns, and they must maintain a safe distance from other vehicles. To make themselves visible to other drivers, it is suggested that motorcyclists wear brightly colored clothing, and position themselves in the lane so they can be seen. While it may not be a requirement in some states, wearing a compliant helmet can help protect the motorcyclist in the event of an accident. For all drivers, drinking and driving kills and is against the law. The mentioned safety suggestions may seem like common knowledge, but many accidents and tragic deaths do occur. In 2009, according to NHTSA's Fatality Reporting System (FARS), 4,406 people died in motorcycle accidents. We encourage you to acknowledge May as Motorcycle Safety Awareness month, and be reminded to respect each other, and obey the rules of the road, yes!

Motorcycle Helmet Safety Standards

In lieu of Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, this is a good opportunity to mention the importance of motorcycle helmets. To begin, all helmets sold in the United States must meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218. Yet even with the safety standards, there are areas of concern, particularly when using a used helmet or a novelty helmet. A used helmet should be inspected for the required labeling, such as the DOT sticker located on the outside back of the helmet. Other labeling is the Snell or ANSI label located inside the helmet and the manufacturing label. The labels inform the consumer that the helmets meet the FMVSS 218 safety standard; whereas, the novelty helmets do not have such labeling. In a recent [final rule](#), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has made changes to the labeling requirements, which will require an "enhanced certification label" effective May 13, 2013.

Even with the required labeling, one should be cautioned when purchasing a helmet. It is recommended to inspect the helmet closely. A helmet involved in an accident should not be used, because the safety elements such as the inner liner and outer shell may be compromised. Check the chinstraps to ensure they are sturdy, and inspect the rivets to insure they are solid and secure. Safety helmets that meet FMVSS 218 safety standards weigh about 4 to 5 pounds, whereas, a novelty helmet may weigh less than a pound. This is because the outer shell is thin or weak. Moreover, compared to the original polystyrene foam found in the safety-approved helmets, the novelty helmets have little, if any inner liner. When it comes to safety; it is recommended to purchase a new safety approved helmet. While each state law does not mandate the use of helmets; it is recommended to wear a helmet while riding. Doing so will help protect the [head and brain](#) during a crash.



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The testing engineers at The Engineering Institute can provide c on helmets. Further, their testing determines the *Head Injury* values to the relevant standards.

Featuring Testing Engineer: David Beltran, B.S.M.E.

A graduate of the University of Arkansas, David Beltran is a mechanical engineer with five years of engineering experience. David became a test engineer for The Engineering Institute in year 2006. His area of expertise is vehicle design, and vehicle and component test design. In addition, David has extensive experience in [vehicle dynamics testing](#) including protocol, and [ATV analysis and testing](#).



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