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NEWS

...IN 60 SECONDS

NO PLACE TO HIDE

THE government has found a new way of cracking down on uninsured drivers next year. Owners of vehicles that aren't insured or declared off the road will have a £60 fine drop on their doormat. Newly-granted access to insurance company records means the police no longer have to stop you at the roadside in order to issue the fine.

BRUTALE PRICE REDUCTION



THERE'S £1500 off the official price of a MV Agusta Brutale 750 from this week - but only while current stocks last. Since the 910 Brutale was released earlier this year, demand for the 750 has slackened off as both bikes were on sale at the identical price of £10,500. For further details, contact Three Cross Motorcycles on 01202-823344.

HURRICANE AID AUCTION

AMERICAN chat show host Jay Leno's signed Harley-Davidson was auctioned to raise money for the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts last week - and sold for a whopping £285,987. The bike nut's Harley FLTRI Road Glide was signed by nearly 80 celebrities including Pamela Anderson, Sylvester Stallone and Ozzy Osbourne.

COPPERS GET KNOCK-OFF

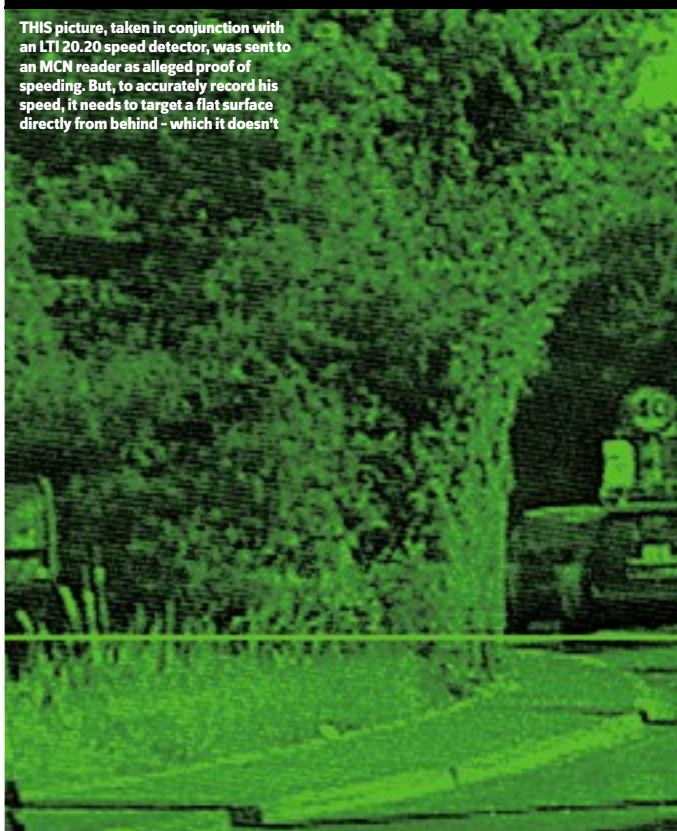
POLICE bike cops from Birmingham were knocked off their BMWs by thieves whilst investigating a stolen car. The driver reversed into one officer, hitting him off his machine, the second officer was then skittled off as the thieves tried to speed away. Luckily, both officers escaped with only minor injuries and were both discharged from hospital on the same day as the incident. Three men, aged 24, 28 and 29 have been charged with assaulting and wounding a police officer.

MCN INVESTIGATION

MISTAKES BIKES, SAY

Distributor of laser speed trap admits using it on motorcycles increases the chance of error, compared to nabbing cars

THIS picture, taken in conjunction with an LTI 20.20 speed detector, was sent to an MCN reader as alleged proof of speeding. But, to accurately record his speed, it needs to target a flat surface directly from behind - which it doesn't



Date: 18-07-2005 Speed: 37 mph
Time: 17:21:53.95 Operator: SSCP

More riders
will fight
convictions

WE'RE already using our legal contacts and findings on LTI 20.20s to help readers challenge speeding charges they believe are false. Our latest revelations in this week's MCN from the speed gun suppliers themselves will strengthen our readers' cases.

MCN reader Mitch Paris, a 44-year-old Yamaha TDM900 rider from Lavenham, Suffolk was sent the above picture of him allegedly speeding by Suffolk speed camera

'MORE LIKELY' ON SPEED GUN FIRM

BY STEVE FARRELL

THE UK distributor of Britain's most commonly used camera van speed traps has admitted they are less accurate on bikes.

This latest evidence will strengthen the case of those already fighting speeding charges on the basis that the guns don't work reliably on bikes – and could eventually lead to 1000s of convictions being overturned (see below).

Posing as motorcyclists planning to break the world speed record, we approached Télé-traffic UK, the suppliers of the controversial LTI 20.20 speed detector, for their

take on its accuracy.

When asked whether there was a greater potential margin for error when using the lasers to measure a bike's speed as compared to cars, the firm's customer service manager Mike Ricketts said: "Oh yes. By the nature of the fact that a motorcycle is a such a small object, they are slightly more difficult to use."

Ricketts went on to admit that unless the operator is either directly in front of or behind the bike, the speed measurement can be distorted by 'cosine effect', resulting from the laser being at an angle to the target.

He also went on to suggest that, because a bike is a smaller target, a

tripod should be used – even though the firm makes no such recommendation to the police.

Around five million people, including thousands of motorcyclists, have speeding convictions based on evidence from the LTI 20.20. Télé-traffic UK supplies handheld and tripod-mounted versions of the laser, plus a model attached to a camera, which are used in speed camera vans across the UK.

The firm proudly boasts on its website that it 'serves over 97 per cent of the UK police forces and the whole of Ireland'.

In the past, Télé-traffic has rigorously denied the LTI 20.20 is less accurate on motorcycles,

despite claims to the contrary from leading academic experts.

In July, Télé-traffic MD Frank Garrett insisted the lasers had been tested on bikes before receiving type approval from the government, even though the Home Office – which issues type approval – admitted they hadn't.

Dr Michael Clark, chairman of the European Standards Committee on Vehicle Detectors, said: "We've managed to get hold of a UK type-approved LTI 20.20 and we have found that they get an inaccurate signal off motorcycles. You haven't got a hope in hell of getting a good reading from the front. Your only chance is off the number plate, from behind."

HOW THE CAMERA SUPPLIERS CAME CLEAN

MCN: Are your systems optimised for motorcycles?

MIKE RICKETTS: Optimised for motorcycles? Well, by the nature of the fact that a motorcycle is a small object, they are slightly more difficult to use... It's the angle really that you need to be

careful of. Either you've got to be in front of it, directly, so you don't lose any accuracy on what we call cosine effect.

MCN: Does the fact it's a motorcycle increase the margin for error?

MR: Obviously, motorcycles being

smaller targets are more difficult to use and acquire, but if you set it up on a tripod and you know the route that it's going to take, you can ping away all day. It's just that motorcycles are technically more difficult to acquire... It just depends how much of a target

area you've got to work on.

MCN: So what you are saying is that, when recording the speed of a motorcycle with an LTI 20.20, there is going to be a larger potential margin of error?

MR: Oh yes.

NEW RIDER

BY TIM SKILTON



WASH your bike after every ride to keep rot at bay

Riding out the rough weather

IT'S now only a matter of weeks until the cold weather really starts to set in. The sight of gritting lorries plastering the roads with salt is enough to make anyone wince – but especially if you're on a bike, because the corrosive grit can ruin a motorcycle's finish in no time.

If you take the time to think ahead and spend a few hours preparing your machine to endure the ravages of winter, you will be able to keep riding all year round and still keep your bike in tip-top condition.

If you want to ride through the colder conditions, a good tip is to coat all the metal surfaces of your bike with a thick protecting fluid like Finnegan's Waxoyl. This brush-on solution can be applied to the wheels, frame, swingarm, forks and anywhere else that looks like it could suffer from corrosion. Just make sure it stays clear of your tyres and brake discs for obvious reasons.

The trick is to do it at this time of year, before the road salt is used, so that you can get your bike's barrier in place early. The thick coating of wax is waterproof and durable, and should last all winter, leaving you free to enjoy your daily commute with some peace of mind. To get the wax off your bike use a good degreaser – and the surfaces will look as good as new afterwards.

If you only intend to ride during the odd sunny winter's day, then we'd recommend washing your bike every time you ride. This sounds like a

'You can keep riding all year and keep your machine in tip-top condition'

load of hassle but it's the most effective way to keep corrosive salt off your bike and only takes a few minutes at the end of each ride. Take one bucket, a dose of car wax (not washing-up liquid, as it contains salt) and plenty of hot water. Use a sponge for the bodywork and a dish brush for all the nooks and crannies. Wash the bike down with loads of fresh water and apply a light protectant, like Scottoil FS365 or similar.



FS365: top protection

'We have found that the LTI 20.20 gets an inaccurate signal off motorcycles'

DR MICHAEL CLARK, EUROPEAN STANDARDS COMMITTEE ON VEHICLE DETECTORS

Zone: 30 mph Distance: 889.4 m Direction: [A]
4 Location: a1008pba Infringement: 44

partnership. Paris said: "The crosshairs show it is not targeted on my number plate."

Paris is now considering challenging the charge in court, with expert testimony from Dr Michael Clark (see above). Clark told MCN: "Black surfaces cause problems for the lasers. It shows the officer wasn't doing things properly."

Yessin Meggaro, 27, from Bristol, is challenging a speeding

charge after his Suzuki GSX-R600 was photographed by a mobile speed camera van on the A4 in Bath. "They claim I was doing 37mph in a 30 zone, but I know I was doing 30," he said.

Yessin has applied for legal aid after we put him in touch with Kirwans Solicitors in Wirral (0151-608-9078) and partner Paul Ford agreed to represent him.

If either of these cases go to

Crown Court a legal precedent could be set, enabling other riders to appeal against past convictions. Thousands of motorcyclists could get points removed from their licences and fines totalling millions of pounds refunded.

"It's a slow process, but I'm going to fight it all the way," said Meggaro.

Now we're helping others too. Spurred on by the findings of our investigations, 32-year-old Aprilia

RSV Mille rider James Gray, from Nottingham, also plans to fight a charge. "I was clocked coming over a humpback bridge, but I know I wasn't speeding," he said. And Alan Mitchell, a 42-year-old Honda VTR1000 rider from Kelso, Scotland, has already begun proceedings against a charge, based on the use of an LTI 20.20.

If you've been caught by a mobile speed trap, and believe you are innocent, let us know.