CALIFORNIA GETS SERIOUS ABOUT SOUND
Federal Emissions Labels Required in 2013

Loud Pipes Risk Rights. That’s a mantra the AMA has repeated for years. And, over the years, government officials and lawmakers have proven that mantra to be true. The latest example is in California.

A new California law requires street motorcycles registered in the state and built on or after Jan. 1, 2013 to have an exhaust system label certifying the motorcycles meet federal sound limits.

On Sept. 28, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law Senate Bill 435, sponsored by Sen. Fran Pavley (D-Agoura Hills), which imposes that new requirement. While motorcycle manufacturers have been complying with a federal law requiring labeling since it went into effect in 1983, the California law now makes it illegal to operate any motorcycle registered in the state that was built on or after Jan. 1, 2013 that doesn’t have a federal Environmental Protection Agency exhaust system sound emissions label.

In addition, the law requires aftermarket exhaust systems made on or after Jan. 1, 2013 to display the EPA sound emissions label, and applies to individuals who seek to replace the exhaust system on motorcycles used on the road.

The AMA has some major concerns about the new law.

“Requiring a motorcycle to display a readily visible EPA label isn’t the appropriate way to address concerns about excessive motorcycle sound, which the AMA has pointed out repeatedly,” says Nick Haris, AMA Western states representative. “The only objective way to determine whether a motorcycle complies with sound laws is for properly trained personnel to conduct sound level tests using calibrated meters and an agreed-upon testing procedure.”

Further, Haris adds, relying on a label does not necessarily make the roadside investigation any simpler.

“EPA labels can be difficult to locate on many motorcycles,” Haris says. “This law could lead to a flurry of tickets for motorcyclists who have legal exhaust systems with EPA labels on their machines that can’t be easily seen. It’s unreasonable to expect a law enforcement officer to easily locate the EPA label on every motorcycle, and it’s simply unfair to expect a motorcycle owner to partially dismantle a motorcycle along the roadside to prove the label exists.”

Violators face fines of up to $100 for a first offense and up to $250 for subsequent offenses. Judges have the discretion to dismiss the fine for first-time offenders if the violation is corrected.

Also, a violation is considered a secondary offense, meaning a police officer can’t stop a motorcyclist solely because the officer believes the motorcyclist is breaking the sound emissions label law.

The AMA has long maintained a position of strong opposition to excessive motorcycle sound. In September 2009, the AMA developed model legislation for use by cities and states seeking a simple, consistent and economical way to deal with sound complaints related to on-highway motorcycles within the larger context of excessive sound from all sources.

The model legislation offers an objective method to evaluate motorcycle sound based on the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) J2825 standard, “Measurement of Exhaust Sound Pressure Levels of Stationary On-Highway Motorcycles,” which is a stationary test.

For more information, go to AmericanMotorcyclist.com > Rights > Resources > Model Legislation.
AMA AWARDS SOUND METERS
Effort Promotes Responsible Riding

In the AMA's continuing effort to educate riders about how noisy bikes risk rights, the Government Relations Department has awarded seven sound-level test kits to AMA districts, affiliated organizations and promoters for 2010. The kits are used to test the sound level of bikes to educate riders about how loud, or quiet, their bikes are, and to ensure that race bikes meet AMA competition sound limits.

“Few other factors contribute more to misunderstanding and prejudice against the motorcycle community than excessively noisy motorcycles,” says Royce Wood, AMA government affairs manager. “With accurate sound testing, riders can know how loud their bikes are and can get advice from the testers about how to quiet down their machines.”

The sound-level test kits were granted to the New England Trail Riders Association, North Alabama Trail Riders Association, Range Riders Motorcycle Club, New York City Motorcycle Advocacy Group, ABATE of Michigan, the Chai Riders Motorcycle Club and the Knights of Columbus Motorcycle Ministry.

Each got an entire kit that includes a sound meter, tachometer, instructional DVD and manual, spark arrester probe, personal protective equipment and a certificate for a free annual recalibration from the sound meter supplier.

HELMETS VS. CRASH PREVENTION
Federal Official Wants Congress To Promote Helmet Use

The head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) told a congressional panel on Sept. 28 that he wants to work with Congress to promote helmet use among motorcyclists across the United States.

NHTSA Administrator David Strickland made the comment to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Insurance. His comments were part of his overall testimony regarding how safety provisions in the transportation reauthorization bill (SAFETEA-LU) played a role in reducing highway fatalities.

“The AMA encourages riders to wear all the safety gear all the time,” says Ed Moreland, AMA senior vice president for government relations. “But we were very disappointed that Administrator Strickland didn’t talk about programs to prevent crashes in the first place.”

“The AMA believes that the best way for NHTSA to reduce motorcycle crashes is through programs such as rider education and increasing motorcycle awareness among vehicle drivers,” Moreland says. “These programs would help reduce the likelihood of a crash.”

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY ADMINISTRATORS HONOR RAY OCHS
Ochs Recognized For Outstanding Contributions

The National Association of State Motorcycle Safety Administrators (SMSA) has honored Ray Ochs, director of training systems for the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF), with its annual Chairperson’s Award.

The honor was announced at the group’s annual conference in Columbus, Ohio, on Aug. 20-22. The SMSA said the honor was for Ochs’ work in national rider education and training. SMSA Executive Committee member Ken Kiphart of the Nevada Department of Public Safety presented the award.

Each year, the SMSA recognizes an individual who has helped advance motorcycle rider education and training. The award is intended to recognize individual contributions to motorcycle safety at local, state, and national levels.

Ochs has more than 40 years of experience in education, training and leadership functions and has been associated with MSF development programs since its inception in 1973. He has owned multiple motorcycles in his 44-plus years on the road and currently rides a touring bike.

Ken Kiphart (left) and Ray Ochs