



MAG Position Statement Airbags

History

Airbags have been used in cars since the 1950's, becoming commonplace in the 1990's. Recent years have seen the development of airbags for use on motorcycles that inflate in the event of an accident.

When the motorcycle industry carried out research into a draft leg-protector design in the late 1980's, they conducted experiments using crash test dummies. Examination of the results suggested that leg protectors would alter the trajectory of a rider in a way likely to substantially increase the number and severity of head injuries to riders. The Transport Research Laboratory's response was the engineering 'fix' of airbags.

Reality

When fitted to a car, usually within the steering wheel or dashboard, the airbag inflates when the vehicle is involved in an impact to restrain the motion of the driver's head. When fitted to a motorcycle, the airbag is designed to restrict the movement of the rider's head and upper body to prevent injuries.

There are drawbacks to the design of airbags. The device needs to back onto a solid surface to prevent the airbag moving away from the rider or from deforming outwards and reducing the effectiveness of the airbag. This means that there must be a full fairing to aid the rigidity and effectiveness of the invention. Tank bags would be impossible to use as they would cover the airbag. There would also need to be a different design of airbag for each model of motorcycle, the costs of which would inevitably be passed onto the customer.

It should further be noted that airbags will only work in certain types of collision and that many styles of powered two-wheeler would not support their installation due to having insufficient mass to support the airbag on inflation.

Further drawbacks to the adding of an airbag to a motorcycle include 'accidental' inflation (where, for example, a motorcycle is involved in an incident whilst stationary, such as falling from its stand or being knocked over) and the effect of the airbag going off on the handling of a motorcycle, particularly if it is of a small and light nature.

Currently

At the present time there are no plans to make airbags a legal requirement, or even a standard for manufacturers to adhere to.

MAG position

MAG is opposed to the compulsory implementation of airbags, and suggests that there is an increasing tendency to generate legislation that discriminates against the victims of other people's incompetence.

MAG does not oppose the freedom of the individual to choose clothing or vehicles fitted with airbags.

MAG supports training and education of all road-users to the high standard expected of motorcyclists and, where necessary, the use of enforcement to drive home the dangers of inappropriate actions in respect to riders of powered two-wheelers.