



FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO EXISTENTIAL THREATS? YOU BETCHA

BY ROB DINGMAN

The mission of the American Motorcyclist Association is to promote the motorcycle lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling. I want to focus on the latter element for a moment, as I don't know that I have ever been more concerned about the future of our sport. The threats we face today are not the run-of-the-mill government-knows-best/hannie-state issues, either. Rather, they are existential threats to motorcycling.

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, AT LEAST RECOGNIZE THIS: BY ALLOWING THIS UNTESTED AUTONOMOUS-VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY TO SHARE THE ROADWAYS WITH US, WHICH EFFECTIVELY MAKES US ALL BETA-TESTING GUINEA PIGS, WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN DEEMED EXPENDABLE.

For years I have sounded the alarm about motorcyclists sharing our roadways with untested autonomous vehicles (AVs). Editor Boehm's column this month reflects his growing angst with automakers encouraging inattentive behavior in their marketing, with one company going so far as to suggest you can watch a movie or surf the internet while in the driver's seat.

We've been telling you for a while now that none of this technology has been adequately proven to detect motorcycles on the roadways in real-world situations. In fact, some can't even detect emergency vehicles, as evidenced by the rash of crashes with emergency vehicles caused last year by AVs.

I have covered this topic several times, going back at least as far as November of 2016, and my concern hasn't faded one bit. Yes, there is great potential in this technology to save lives and prevent injuries.

My fear, however, lies in how this technology continues to be rushed to market, not only without adequate testing but without proving it can detect things that it should be required to recognize and avoid, such as motorcycles and emergency vehicles.

My great concern is that John Q. Public's desire to watch a movie or surf the web while behind the wheel will override the interests of our relatively small universe of motorcyclists, whose desire is to continue to operate a vehicle with two

wheels by themselves. Our interests will easily be deemed inconsequential by the bureaucracy, particularly if we become the sole obstacle to a future with fully autonomous vehicles.

If you don't believe me, at least recognize this: By allowing this untested technology to share the roadways with us, which effectively makes us all beta-testing guinea pigs, we have already been deemed expendable.

As if the AV situation isn't bad enough, a state legislator in Connecticut whose name is, and I am not making this up, Senator Looney, has put forward a proposal to make any motorcyclist who deigns to ride without a helmet, a practice that is currently perfectly legal in Connecticut, a *mandatory organ donor*.

When contacted by our government relations department, a legislative aide to the looney Senator told our staff that the bill is intended to "help

fix the declining organ donation rates in Connecticut." The aide added that, "if motorcyclists decide to put their lives at risk by riding without a helmet, we can assume they don't care where their organs end up."

The aptly-named Senator Looney apparently has a callous disregard for the sanctity of motorcyclists' lives. It is abhorrent that his primary motivation for this proposal is to increase organ donation and not to save the lives of motorcyclists. Just so you know, the federally designated Organ Procurement Organization responsible for coordinating organ and tissue donation in New England, is opposed to any legislation that presumes consent for organ donation. Gift law principles typically require a *voluntary* act.

And for the nitwit that wrote the AMA in response to an alert we sent out on the legislation telling us how much he liked the proposal, you may yourself get the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of presumed consent. You see, since the main goal of the initiative is to increase organ donation, it won't be long before presumed consent is applied to *all* motorcyclists, not just the helmetless.

I've been at this for over three decades, and I don't know that I've ever experienced threats like these... ones that ignore the interests of motorcyclists and assume we don't even exist. That alone should tell you that these threats have the potential to wipe out motorcycling altogether, and why a strong, national voice, singularly focused on the motorcycle lifestyle and defending its future, is more important now than ever before.

Rob Dingman is the President and CEO of the AMA, and a Charter Life Member