



MAG Ireland

The Irish Motorcyclists' Action Group

Press Release

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Hard-pressed motorists to bear brunt of extended testing proposals

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New proposals from the EU Commission¹ will see all cars over four years old tested annually, while also bringing caravans, fast tractors and motorcycles into the testing net for the first time.

Car drivers, currently subject to an NCT every two years for cars between four and ten years old will now be subjected to annual tests, effectively doubling the cost of testing for already hard-pressed motorists. This comes as a further blow to motorists already suffering from record fuel costs, and staring down the barrel of significant road tax increases in December's budget.

The EU Commission proposals will also make caravans, so-called "Fast Tractors" and motorcycles subject to testing in Ireland for the first time - necessitating substantial additional expenditure across the 46 NCTS centres nationwide.

The Irish Motorcyclists' Action Group (MAG Ireland) claims that testing the nation's 35,000 registered motorcycles cannot be cost-effective, as specialist equipment and operative training would be required in each of the 46 test centres across the country. With an average of approximately three to four motorcycles being tested per centre per day, testing is not economically viable at current rates. MAG Ireland has called for a full cost benefit analysis to be carried out on the proposals in the context of the Irish testing regime, something which has been provided for as part of the *National Motorcycle Safety Action Plan 2010-2014*.²

MAG Ireland's Road Safety Officer, Linda O'Loideoin, notes the EU's suggestion that 8% of motorcycle accidents are caused by mechanical failure flies in the face of findings by the Motorcycle Accident In Depth Study (MAIDS) which shows that just 3 of the 921 accidents in the sample (0.3%) cited technical failure as the primary cause³, while technical failure was a *contributory factor* in just 1.6% of all cases.⁴

"If testing was a significant factor in casualty reduction, we would expect to see big differences between casualty rates between countries which have motorcycle

¹http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/road_worthiness_package/proposal_for_a_regulation_on_periodic_roadworthiness_tests_en.pdf

² http://www.rsa.ie/Documents/Road%20Safety/Motorcycles/National_Motorcycle_Action_Plan.pdf (Page 13, Section 4.2.9)

³ Source: <http://www.maids-study.eu/pdf/MAIDS2.pdf> Table C.5, Page 151

⁴ Source: MAIDS Study, <http://www.maids-study.eu/pdf/MAIDS2.pdf> Table 4.2, Page 31
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testing and those which don't." said Linda O'Loideoin, "In fact there is no discernible effect. For example, Sweden is the only country in Scandinavia where periodic roadworthiness tests are mandatory for motorcycles. However, Sweden does not have better motorcycle accident statistics than Denmark, Finland or Norway."

Linda O'Loideoin also notes that countries with motorcycle testing regimes in place see a significantly lower failure rate amongst motorcycles compared to cars. She adds:

"Few motorcycles fail an NCT style test simply because technical failures on motorcycles require immediate attention owing to the fact that even minor issues can directly impact on 'rideability' of a motorcycle. If you don't fix it you can't ride it, so an annual test is of little use beyond picking up things like a cracked lens or consumables like worn tyres."

Here in Ireland, the NCTS tell us that more than 50% of cars fail their NCT first time around, while only 20% of motorcycles fail their MOT first time in the UK.

Despite having one of the strictest testing regimes in Europe, Sweden extended the time between tests for motorcycles in 2004. Riders understand that being a vulnerable road users, it is always in their own interests to mitigate any possible accident risk, and as a result, motorcycles are far less likely to fail a mechanical inspection than are cars.

What the EU Commission proposes is an hugely expensive solution to a problem that barely exists. Millions are to be spent on a "problem" that - at best - affects 2% of motorcycles, which are themselves only about 2% of traffic on Irish roads. With 46 NCT centres, and about 35,000 registered motorcycles, the average test rate will be about three per centre per day. That certainly won't cover costs.

Motorcycles aside, additional specialist equipment and operative training will be required for the testing of caravans, trailers and tractors, which, added to the increased frequency of testing, will inevitably contribute to a substantial increase in the cost of an NCT test for every Irish motorist.

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About MAG Ireland

MAG Ireland (The Irish Motorcyclists' Action Group) was set up in 1985 and represents the interests of Ireland's 30,000+ motorcyclists, scooter and moped users.

Areas tackled by MAG Ireland include road safety, training, road conditions, technical harmonisation, tax issues, consumer issues affecting riders, licensing and insurance.

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