

## NEWS

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## Riders Get to Grips with Manhole Covers

Carriageway manhole covers, especially on bends, can present a potentially lethal danger to motorcyclists. This could all change if UK proposed revisions to a European Standard, are agreed.

Manhole cover surfaces can become smooth and polished and, if wet, very slippery and motorcyclists can be particularly vulnerable due to a sudden change in grip when cornering.

The UK committee on the revision of European Standard EN124 has agreed unanimously to recommend a minimum 'polished skid resistance value for manhole covers', thanks to the work undertaken by the National Motorcycle Council (including The British Motorcyclists Federation (BMF), Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers (IHIE), Motor Cycle Industry Association MCI, Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) RAC Foundation) and Devon County Council.

If adopted this would give manhole covers the equivalent grip of good quality road surfacing and allow an even higher grip cover to be used in areas of greater concern, such as bends.

The next stage will be to gain support and agreement from the other countries.

Welcoming the agreement, Sheila Rainger, Head of Campaigns for the RAC Foundation, said "No-one needs to be put at risk by a slippery manhole cover in the road surface. Safer covers are available but they are rarely used because the current European Standard does not require covers to be skid-resistant in real-world conditions. If the UK is successful in amending the standard, roads will be safer for motorcyclists and for other vulnerable road users."

Chris Hodder, the BMF's Government Relations Executive said: "I would like to thank Devon County Council's Material's Laboratory and the IHIE for their work on this. As motorcyclists we know we need a level of skid resistance equal to that of the main carriageway, but a technical specification was necessary and that's what we have now been able to agree on."

David Short, MAG Campaigns Manager said, "The Government is always talking about joined up thinking in support of road safety and the work undertaken by these different organisations just show what can be achieved when everyone works together. It is the simple measures that can

make so much difference and save lives. The European and UK Government now needs to show some leadership, effect a change in the skid resistance standard and make our roads safer for vulnerable road users.

**- END -**

#### **Notes for Editors**

1. IHIE is the professional qualifying institution for specialist engineers (CEng, IEng and Eng Tech) delivering sustainable transport in the UK.
2. IHIE Guidelines for Motorcycling published in 2005 are the standard reference for improving the road environment for motorcycles. The updated guidelines are available on [www.motorcyleguidelines.org.uk](http://www.motorcyleguidelines.org.uk).

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