



ROAR

December. 2025

Volume 25, Issue 12

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We Wish You and all of your Loved Ones the Best of Holidays and Warm Roads in the New Year

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Upcoming Events

DECEMBER

- 2 GENERAL MEETING
- 9 BOARD MEETING
- 31 NEW YEAR'S EVE!

JANUARY

- 6 GENERAL MEETING
- 13 BOARD MEETING

FEBRUARY

- 15 TC BANQUET

Talk to Greg Smith and Jim Wiseman to get your ideas on the calendar!



The Official Publication
Of Top Cats Illinois



PRESIDENT'S POINT



Hello, Top Cats!!

I hope you and your family/significant others had a great holiday and you're recovering from Thanksgiving food overload. I am...

The weather is looking snowy and more inline with the season, but I am glad it held out this long. Got a bit more riding in. Noelle and I always look forward to December 21st, because we know that after this day, we are on the upswing and the days will start getting longer and we begin looking forward to spring and more Top Cat adventures.

In the meantime... **Wishing you all, happy holidays, a prosperous new year and I hope all your wishes come true!!**

Activities from November...

Nov 22) NISRA Holiday Fashion Show Luncheon - Wiesman. We had a wonderful time at the Northern IL Special Recreation Association (NISRA) holiday fashion show luncheon. As usual, they had a good turnout and some great raffle and auction items, some of which were donations from Top Cat members. Thank you all that attended and supported this event!!

Activities for December...

Dec 7) Ted's Toys for Tots - Ted. Ted is arranging a ride point in Chicago for all to meet and eventually merge into the parade and ultimately ending at the Lane High School parking lot to drop off toys. If you are a brave soul, you could ride from the parade route starting point and meet us... If you didn't know the route actually starts at 83rd and Western Ave in Chicago and is about 15 miles long.

Preview for January and Febuary...

Jan 18) Classic Movie & Chicago Dogs Night - Smith. Greg and Jane (likely mostly Jane) are planning a great get together at the Keller Williams office in Barrington featuring a classic movie and Chicago style hot dogs. Yum!! Sounds like a great time.

Feb 15) Annual Top Cats award dinner - The awards committee team. This is our annual event remembering our past riding season adventures and giving thanks to members who have strived to make our club what it is today. Big thanks to The Smiths and DeLords for checking into new venue options for us. This year we will be having our event at the Grand Victoria Casino in Elgin which looks like a very nice venue with great food. Details will be on the Top Cat calendar and sent in a blast along with cost and RSVP details. Looking forward to it.

*****Check the Top Cat calendar for more details for these events.**

NOTICE:

Elections are coming at the December meeting. Please review the candidate list (will be sent in a blast) and vote for who you feel will provide the best benefit to our club. Keep in mind we need folks like you from the club, to step up as a volunteer to be a director or for a committee member to keep our club legally compliant and viable in our community and for each other. Our club is approaching 30 years which is something to be proud of, so be part of it now and into the future.

SAVE THE DATE(S) NOW: AND... THERE IS STILL room on the calendar...

Let's get a few more rides or other activities together and let's go! Don't need to be complex. **KISS...**

And as usual, watch for blasts and check the Top Cats event calendar regularly and by all means

SAVE THE CLUB ACTIVITY DATES FIRST!

Make sure to send any activity or ride ideas to Greg Smith, Jim Wiseman and I, so they can get it on the calendar and get the word out to the club.

Feel free to reach out to me anytime via my email: gene.rigsby@gmail.com, or phone, 847-770-9425.

Looking forward to seeing you there.... Gene "Lucky" Rigbsby





KAUTION KORNER

Illinois Liscencing...Know Before You Go!!

By: Mike 'Motorcycle' Bradbury

Getting and maintaining an Illinois motorcycle class driver's license is one essential way to be a safer rider. Completing the process and qualifying to legally drive your motorcycle in the state of Illinois enables you more tools to manage your motorcycle riding safely. It teaches you how to ride and travel with other transportation on our roadways more safely.

There are (2) classes of Illinois motorcycle licenses. The "L" class is for motorcycles with a motor that is less than 150 cc and the "M" class is for those with a 150 cc motor or greater. For the sake of this article, we will be referring to "M" class licenses.

To get an Illinois driver's license, you must visit a Driver Services facility and pass a vision screening, written exam, and driving exam (if applicable). You will need to provide proof of your identity, Social Security number, and Illinois residency, pay the required fees, and have your photo taken. Applicants aged 18-20 who have never been licensed must also complete a six-hour Adult Driver Education Course.

General requirements

- **Visit a Driver Services facility:** Go to a Secretary of State Driver Services facility to apply.
- **Provide documents:** Bring acceptable documents proving your identity, Social Security number, and Illinois residency. This includes a Social Security card, passport, or birth certificate.
- **Complete exams:** Pass a vision screening, a written exam, and a driving exam if your age requires it.
- **Pay fees:** Pay the required fees for the license.
- **Have photo taken:** Your picture will be taken at the facility.



There are two options to complete the driver's exam. The first is to complete an IDOT approved Illinois Motorcycle Rider Education Course and receive a completion card. The card can be presented at an Illinois driver's license facility to waive the second option which requires an in-person driver's test at the Illinois driver's license facility.

One major source of these classes was the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF). The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) training program in Illinois experienced significant disruptions due to a vendor change and lawsuits that impacted the insurance of community colleges hosting the classes. This led to the shutdown of training regions, including the North and Central regions, but the program is slowly being re-established with new management under Southern Illinois University (SIU), and courses are gradually becoming available again. Some Harley Davidson dealerships offer new rider and advanced courses. Successful completion of the new rider class earns the MSF basic rider course completion card and satisfies the drivers exam. But the main reason for taking a training course is to help you be a competent, safe rider.

The Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias released a report in 2022 that recommends adjusting the age requirement for mandatory driving tests from 75 to 79, making Illinois consistent with other states. For the past dozen years, Illinois has been the only state in the nation that requires senior drivers to have their behind-the-wheel skills tested on a regular basis. The last two states that mandated driving tests for seniors did away with them in 2011 (New Hampshire) and 2005 (Indiana).

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) statistics in 2022 included a full year of data relating to the emergency rule during the Covid pandemic that raised the age to 79. IDOT reported virtually no change in crash rates for drivers 75 and older, with a crash rate of 24.39 per 1,000 drivers, which is lower than every age range of drivers between 16 and 69 years old. A new law, effective July 1, 2026, will raise the mandatory road test age to 87.

Here are the enhanced license requirements for senior riders from 75 years old and older.

- All persons age 75 and older must take a driving exam at each license renewal.
- All drivers below the age of 81 must renew their licenses every four years
- Drivers aged 79 and 80 must take a vision and driving test
- Drivers aged 81 to 86 must take a vision and driving test every two years
- Drivers aged 87 and older must take a vision and driving test every year

Our licensing requirements do change as we reach 75 years old and older. Complying with and meeting Illinois licensing requirements to be a legal rider can only lead to being more conscious of safety and can contribute to safer riding.



Black Hills Bike Week Sturgis

3 August to 10 August 2026



When we hear "First Call" it typically indicates the first chance to get in on something. When we hear "Last Call" it typically indicates the pending loss of an opportunity to do something that we enjoy. It's no different when it's applied to the annual trek to the Black Hills and Sturgis Bike Week.

This year is the 87th Anniversary of the legendary Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and, possibly, one of the most exciting group rides

to Sturgis.

The increasing interest of our members in this iconic Black Hills Rally, combined with negotiated travel and rally expenses generates the excitement we traditionally experience on the annual ride to Sturgis.

Planned, and led, day rides in the Sturgis area include:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Mount Rushmore | Crazy Horse |
| Wall Drug | Devils Tower |
| Badlands | Spearfish Canyon |
| Downtown Sturgis | Buffalo Chip |
| Custer State Park | Deadwood |
| Wild Life Loop | Black Hills Harley |



If you have the interest and you can afford the time and the cost of the trip, then you'd better make your intentions known for what might be the best, long – distance group ride to the Black Hills Rally yet....

As we do every year, we will take a leisurely ride to Rapid City, SD staying in Mankato, MN the first night, Pierre, SD the second night, and in Rapid City the third and remaining nights.



As most riders realize, it is difficult to plan a ride if you have no idea of how many riders will participate. Once we have an idea of how many are going this year, we will confirm our planned group departure times and locations.

So, if you are "on the fence" about this year's Sturgis trip, let us know now so we can keep you advised of negotiated hotel rates, touring plans, and other details. Remember, you don't

have to commit to anything. Simply stay informed so you can make a decision on attending.

If you can even get a hotel room, typical Bike Week hotel rates will run from \$400 / night to \$700 / night for a luxury hotel equal to Alex Johnson. We have negotiated our annual contract with the Hotel Alex Johnson for a special rate ranging from \$259 / night to \$279 / night.

For planning purposes here's the info for hotel reservations and trip info.

Day 1 Mon, 3 August 2026: (400 miles)

0800 Depart from BP gas station, Hwy 176 and Hwy 12, Wauconda, Illinois.

Arrive Hilton Hotel, 20 Civic Center Plaza, (off of River Front Drive,) Mankato, MN, Phone 507- 344-1111. Arrive 3 August, Depart 4 August \$141.00 / night. Book at front desk, Contact Victory Vogel, Director of Sales only if front desk can't fine the Top Cats block of rooms.

TOP CATS spec rate \$141, cut off date for booking w/o penalty 07/03/2026.

Day 2 Tue, 4 August 2026 (350 miles)

0900 Depart Mankato, MN to Pierre, SD.

Baymont Inn, Pierre, SD, 713 W, Sioux Ave, phone 605-220 -8571 Arrive 4 August, Depart 5 August \$85.00 / night. Book at front desk. Ask for Ron if he is there.

TOP CATS spec rate \$85, cutoff date for booking w/o penalty 07/04/2026.

Day 3 Wed 5 August - 10August 2026: (238 miles)

0900 depart Pierre, SD for Hotel Alex Johnson, 523 6th st., Rapid City, SD, Phone 605-342-1210 or 800-888-ALEX. Arrive 5 August Depart anytime. Book at front desk under Top Cats block, any issues ask for Jessica Scheurer, Director of Sales

TOP CATS spec rates: \$259. Wed 08/05/2026, and 08/06.2026. Then: \$279 Thur 08/07 2026 thru Sun 08/09/2026. (Arr 5 Aug, Dpt 19 Aug or Anytime you want to return home.)

Note Top Cats block at the Alex Johnson is only 6 rooms due to declining TOP Cats attendance over the last few years, so book early. If any rooms are left after our scheduled checkout Monday Aug 10, 2026, they will be priced at the going rates... higher than the special discounted rates we have now. There was a day when Top Cats had an allocation up to 40 rooms, ...which is why they still give us a most favorable group rate.

When booking at any of the above hotels, make sure you identify yourself as being with the Top Cats and find us under the Top Cats block of rooms.

AND after you have completed your bookings, please notify me or Wayne Kirkpatrick wkirkpa177@aol.com so we can keep you informed of all trip information

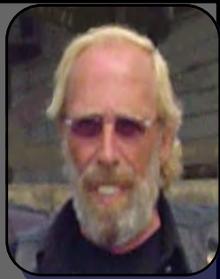
Very best regards,
Bard Board
c/847-72107470

See Page 13 for the final word...



Oil Spots

By Traveler



Bajaj seizes control of KTM



Bajaj has formally taken the reins at KTM after completing a long-planned deal to buy the remaining shares in the

Austrian brand's parent company.

The move hands Bajaj Auto International Holdings B.V. (BAIH) full ownership of Pierer Bajaj AG and a controlling stake in Pierer Mobility AG – which oversees KTM, Husqvarna, and GasGas.

The transfer was triggered after BAIH exercised an option to acquire all shares held by Pierer Industries AG, with the transaction clearing all regulatory hurdles earlier this year.



It gives the Indian giant 74.9% of Pierer Mobility's stock, handing them the keys to Europe's largest motorcycle manufacturer by volume.

Pierer Bajaj AG is set to become Bajaj Auto International Holdings AG, while Pierer Mobility AG will transition to Bajaj Mobility AG before mid-2026.

In May, Bajaj stepped in to inject just over £700 million in order to keep operations afloat at KTM, as the company navigated a turbulent restructuring process that saw sweeping cutbacks, paving the way for the governance overhaul.

Deadly roadside barriers put bikers at risk

A new safety study has raised the alarm on the lethal risk posed by steel guardrails to motorcyclists, partic-

ularly in upright crashes where the rider hits the barrier head-on.

Commissioned by the Federation of European Motorcyclists' Associations (FEMA), the investigation looked to identify innovations for safer infrastructure for bikers.



“More than half of single-motorcycle crashes result in fatalities or severe injuries,” said researchers who conducted the study from the University of Maribor, Slovenia,

adding that existing barrier designs offer little benefit. In fact, they may present a deadly hazard for bikers.

“Upright-posture motorcycle crashes against steel safety barriers (SSBs) often result in severe upper-body injuries due to the sharp upper edge of the rail”.

While modern ‘motorcycle-friendly’ add-ons exist to help protect against sliding crashes – where a rider separates from the bike and slides into the base of the armco – the top rail remains largely unprotected.

According to the researchers, “most existing solutions are focused on stopping sliding injuries... we found that very few address the risk of what happens when a motorcyclist hits the upper rail head-on.”

The team assessed 13 international designs aimed at tackling the issue, revealing promising ideas including a retrofit system from Texas that fits simple steel plating on top of existing barriers, plus an easy to install Spanish concept that involves a plastic-capped profile to soften the upper edge of the rail.

Despite the potential for safety improvements, findings suggest that adoption of these solutions is minimal, pointing to obstructive installation costs and the complete absence of “widely accepted crash-test criterion that considers the impacts of motorcyclists in upright posture.”

These types of incidents, which occur most commonly in rural areas make up a large chunk of biking fatalities – with 45% of all motorcycle deaths occurring from single-vehicle incidents in so-called ‘run-off’ accidents.

(Continued on pg 6)



Oil Spots, continued...

The authors are calling for urgent collaboration between biker interest groups, researchers, and road authorities: “Clearly defined, evidence-based criteria must be established... This cannot be achieved without strong collaboration between motorcyclist associations, the research community, and industry.”

Riders are encouraged to report dangerous barriers to groups such as A.B.A.T.E. and AMA.

Electric Bike Turns Into a Suitcase



There’s something fun about folding electric motorcycles. They’re small, a little weird, and impossible to dislike. You look at one and

instantly get that “I need to try this” feeling. The Icoma Tatamel Bike taps into that energy in the best way. It folds into a suitcase-sized block you can roll around like luggage, then unfolds into a tiny electric motorcycle you can actually ride.

The Tatamel Bike feels like a Transformer someone accidentally turned into a real product. Icoma isn’t trying to be a big player in the e-bike world. They’re more interested in fun ideas and oddball engineering, which is what makes them worth paying attention to.

Folded up, it measures about 27 inches long, 27 inches tall, and 10 inches thick. Open it up, and it becomes roughly 48 inches long, 39 inches tall, and 25 inches wide. That size puts it right between “tiny urban runabout” and “fun-sized minibike,” which is a sweet spot for riders who want something compact but still usable.

It weighs 139 pounds, so it isn’t something you’ll want to lift every day, but the aluminum frame and folding hardware make up most of that. It rides on a proper front fork and a rear monoshock, so it doesn’t have that cheap stand-up scooter feel. The wheels are mismatched in a quirky way. The front is 10 inches, and the rear is 6.5 inches (good luck finding tires for that), and it’s rated to carry up to 220 pounds, which covers plenty of adult riders just fine.

Power comes from a 600-watt motor with a 2,000-watt peak, or about 0.8 horsepower with quick bursts up to roughly 2.7 horsepower. It tops out at around 25 miles per hour, which is more than enough for neighborhood

rides or short city hops. The 600-watt-hour LiFePO4 battery has 51.2 volts and 12 amp hours, good for around 18.6 miles of real-world use. There’s a USB port too, letting you use the bike as a tiny power station if you need to top up a device.

Of course, the big question is whether you can really treat it like a suitcase and take it on a plane. The short answer is no. The battery is way bigger than what airlines allow. The FAA caps mobility device batteries at 300 watt hours, and the Tatamel’s pack is literally double that. A lot of airlines also have blanket bans on anything that looks like an e-bike or electric scooter. So this is a trunk bike or apartment bike, not an airport bike.

Used for what it’s designed for, it makes a ton of sense. It’s small enough to store inside, fast enough for errands, and built with real suspension so it doesn’t feel like a toy. It lives in the same mental space as the Honda Motocompacto, but with more power, more personality, and more of that minibike feel.

Pricing starts at \$3,300, US buyers will surely pay much more once shipping and import fees are added.

Norton’s New HUD Helmet, but Does Anyone Want It?



TVS has designed a helmet with a heads-up display, and just about every other piece of technology you can imagine on it. But will it cause too much distraction, or will it save lives?

Smart helmets seem to be an unavoidable future. But Quin’s smart pod could literally save your life in the event of a crash, and you’d never even know you were wearing a smart helmet other than when the paramedics show up without you needing to call, on the other end of the spectrum are helmets that have technology that comes between you and the road. Enter TVS’ latest heads-up display (HUD) helmet.

Some of us might not be familiar with TVS Motor, but the brand acquired Norton back in 2020 and is responsible for its resurgence.

This lid will basically function as your smartphone, and TVS has worked with Switzerland-based Aegis Rider and uses Qualcomm technology to make sure of it. This project has been in the works for five years,

(Continued on page 7)



Oil Spots, continued...

and when you understand how much information it provides, you'll see why it took so long.

The HUD will show most of the bike's crucial information, like speed, RPM, fuel level, gear position, and everything else you could find on your phone, like maps, turn-by-turn navigation, calls, and messages. Of course, there are speakers, you can play music, and there's a built-in communication system too. There's also an integrated action camera—don't even think about how much this thing will weigh.

Unfortunately, TVS says the unit will only have a 4-hour battery life, which isn't great. It's possible the company needed to make the battery small to keep weight down.

650 Harley-Davidson Dealerships Shut Down In \$377M Dealer Meltdown



The sudden closure of Harley-Davidson dealerships in June 2024 sent shockwaves through the motorcycle

world. For more than a century, they had been a gathering places for riders and a symbol of American freedom. Their abrupt shutdown was a part of a nationwide wave of closures that has left the future of Harley-Davidson's iconic dealership network in question.

Harley-Davidson dealerships—some with histories stretching back over 100 years—began shuttering across California, New York, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Colorado, Wyoming, and other states. The pace of closures accelerated into 2025, revealing a crisis that extended far beyond individual business struggles. These dealerships, once pillars of their communities, closed quietly and without warning, leaving loyal customers and employees in limbo.

Generations of employees, many of whom saw Harley-Davidson as more than just a job, suddenly found themselves unemployed. Family-owned dealerships, some in operation for decades, were forced to make painful decisions to close their doors. In small towns, Harley dealerships had served as economic and cul-

tural anchors, supporting local events and charities. Their disappearance has left economic gaps and a sense of loss that extends beyond the motorcycle industry.

As Harley-Davidson's presence recedes, competitors have moved quickly to fill the void. Indian Motorcycles has attracted former Harley dealers with reliable service and support, while Japanese brands like Honda, Yamaha, and Kawasaki have expanded their market share with diverse, affordable models. Harley's premium pricing and aging brand image have made it difficult to compete, especially as rivals target younger and more diverse riders.



Despite reporting a \$377 million profit in the third quarter of 2025—more than triple the previous

year—Harley-Davidson's core business continued to contract. The company's sale of its financial services division provided a temporary financial boost, but global motorcycle sales fell by 6%, and the dealership network kept shrinking. Many franchise owners expressed frustration with Harley's corporate leadership, citing a lack of support, restrictive pricing, inventory demands that made profitability elusive, and pressure to undertake expensive facility remodeling.

The company's shift toward digital sales and direct-to-consumer strategies further eroded dealer margins and loyalty, with management marking down clothing, parts, and accessories online at 40-60% discounts with free shipping while dealers struggled to compete.



EVERY MAJOR MOTORCYCLE HELMET BRAND RANKED WORST TO BEST IN NHTSA COMPLIANCE TESTING

BY ERYNN RUIZ



Shoei Helmets

A helmet is a helmet, until you're sliding along the asphalt on your noggin. Sure, most motorcycle helmets on the market today meet minimum safety requirements. But does meeting the minimum make a motorcycle helmet brand the best? It turns out that beyond minimum requirements, some brands put in the work to meet stricter safety standards that exceed minimums. Not only that, but some receive outstanding marks when it comes to government testing.

To determine the best motorcycle helmet brands versus the worst, we've taken a look at brand compliance, meaning whether helmets pass rigorous testing standards by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and which safety standards their products meet or exceed, such as DOT, Snell, ECE, and others.

One note regarding the NHTSA's compliance reporting: NHTSA flags various issues ranging from the failure of a company to file its Manufacturer Identification with the organization to stickers that aren't permanent enough to catastrophic failures in testing. Thus, we've provided an explanation of some noted issues along with the failure rate for each brand, as the nature of the failure determines our overall rankings.

There's a lot to look for when choosing a motorcycle helmet, so here is every major motorcycle helmet brand ranked worst to best. Stay tuned after the list for more on our methodology.

14. HJC Helmets

HJC Helmets has been in the industry for decades and prides itself on innovation. It even has a wind tunnel testing laboratory



and facilities in the United States, France, Vietnam, and Korea. Despite its promised commitment to rider safety and satisfaction, HJC does not seem to go beyond the minimum safety requirements.

HJC meets DOT (Department of Transportation) standards, DOT FMVSS No. 218, according to its labeling and advertising, but does not specify other safety standards. The F71, for example, is described as "Meets or exceeds DOT approved."

Based on the NHTSA's compliance test report database, HJC had an overall failure rate of about 23%. Testing issues included failures that were both labeling and impact related. The latter is more worrisome given that impact relates to safety, whereas a label falling off won't directly harm a rider.

Given the brand's lack of additional certifications plus the test failures (and relatively high fail rate), HJC is the worst-rated in our lineup.

13. KLIM



Klim

KLIM is a relatively well-known helmet brand, and its helmets are some of the most expensive on the market. With prices starting at around \$550, KLIM helmets do offer both DOT and ECE certification. ECE ratings come from the Economic Commission for Europe, which governs traffic safety standards across Europe. An ECE 22.06 rating isn't legally required in the U.S., but it's a safety standard in Europe and is often seen as a perk on top of DOT certification. You won't find a helmet sold in the U.S. that is only ECE, though; DOT is the primary standard.

Despite the fact that some KLIM helmets have both DOT and ECE ratings, the brand only has one test in the NHTSA's database. Given that the single test identified failures in three of four impact scenarios, that means a 100% failure rate.

The lack of safety data available means KLIM cannot be one of the best helmets among our rankings. However, if you're interested in purchasing one, you can find KLIM helmets on Amazon.

(Continued on page 10)



Helmets Continued...

12. Biltwell

Biltwell



Most Biltwell helmets are listed by their product name plus the current ECE standard and DOT certification. At first glance, these relatively affordable helmets (plenty of models are just under \$300) seem like a great deal with safety in mind. When you click on a helmet's details, the DOT compliance is also highlighted.

Unfortunately, the NHTSA's testing doesn't instill complete confidence in Biltwell. To date, the NHTSA only has four results for Biltwell in its database, and all four (a combination of complete and full/open-face helmets) resulted in some failures. Granted, the failures were all related to labeling rather than true safety issues. However, the ratings mean a 100% failure rate and seem to hint that Biltwell needs to work on its labeling processes.

Further, four tests (and two out of nearly countless standards) are hardly enough information to recommend a helmet, so Biltwell didn't score well in our survey. That said, if you're interested, Biltwell helmets are readily available on Amazon.



11. AGV

AGV

A helmet is an essential piece of motorcycle gear the moment you start riding, so you don't want to take chances. In a disappointing turn of events, AGV, a middling-cost brand, doesn't appear to have the best-quality helmets on the market.

While most AGV helmets are both DOT and ECE compliant (the K6 S, for example, is denoted as DOT and E2206), not all of them performed well in the NHTSA's performance testing. A total failure rate of over 47% means AGV ranks low on our list, despite the fact that many of its full-face helmets passed testing with no issues

identified. Those that did have issues, such as the OF44H, involved both impact- (vital) and labeling-related (not so serious) failures.

Given the mixed results, AGV helmets don't perform consistently enough to inspire full confidence. However, NHTSA testing instills more confidence in the full-face helmets, meaning those might be the best option in AGV's lineup.

10. LS2

LS2 Hel-
met-
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LS2 hel-
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meet DOT and ECE standards, with some models also meeting FRHPhe-01 requirements, the FIM Racing standard for road racing helmets. A couple of LS2 helmet models also meet Snell standards, though not all.

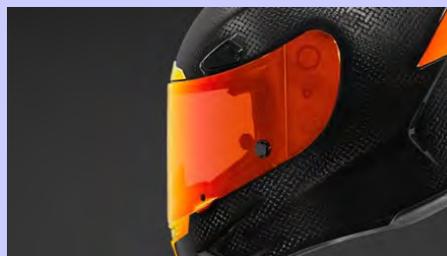
However, when it came to the NHTSA's database, LS2 helmets had an over 45% failure rate, with five out of 11 compliance tests throwing red flags. Some failures involved labeling, but one involved multiple failures across impact and penetration tests, which relate to how well the helmet can handle impact and sharp objects.

While LS2's full-face helmets tended to fare better in testing, the lack of good marks across the board leaves the brand leaning toward the lower end of our list. Further, most helmets we looked at had an ECE 22.05 rating, while 22.06 is the newer and presumably even safer standard. Even if LS2 did meet the newer standard, the high failure rate would still give us pause. If you do want to check LS2 out, Amazon carries these helmets.



9. Icon

Ride Icon



Icon helmets are priced nicely, and Icon doesn't charge extra for added style. Most Icon helmets are around \$300, making safety and flashy looks equally affordable — in theory. Many entry-level helmets from this brand meet various safety standards and come in cool color patterns, including glow-in-the-dark, vibrantly colored face shields, and more. However, it's not all good news when it comes to Icon's standards or safety record.

(Continued on page 10)

Helmets Continued...

Some Icon helmets, such as the Elsinore Monotype, meet DOT requirements, but apparently do not have any other certifications. Others, like the Airflite, which had an impact failure per the NHTSA, meet DOT, ECE 22.06, and PSC (Japan) safety standards. Because PSC isn't necessarily applicable in the U.S., it might not be wholly relevant since testing methods vary by country.

Overall, Icon had over a 45% failure rate, meaning despite its DOT and other compliance, it's not one of the best motorcycle helmet brands on the market for safety or reliability. Other brands performed better according to the NHTSA's database, including better-known ones.

8. Harley-Davidson



Harley-Davidson

Harley-Davidson makes some of the best-sounding motorcycles, but its helmets don't have such an awesome reputation across the board. While Harley-Davidson helmets like the H-D Velo H34 meet DOT and ECE 22.06 standards, not all of the brand's helmets have performed well in compliance testing.

The NHTSA reported that three of seven compliance tests had issues, with, at times, some seriously concerning failures related to impact and penetration testing. However, the NHTSA only tested partial helmets, not full-face models. Overall, the lack of data on any full-face helmets is what resulted in Harley-Davidson's lower spot on our list. Models like the H-D Velo H34 (this model rolled out at only \$150) might very well be some of the most affordable and safest on the market, but we need more data to speak to the latter point. It's not that Harley-Davidson helmets aren't safe, just that other brands instill a higher level of consumer confidence given their track records (and extra standards).

7. Scorpion

Scorpion USA

Scorpion helmets mark a turning point in our list of the



worst-to-best-ranked helmets based on NHTSA testing. While Scorpion's helmets mostly appear to conform to DOT requirements (some denote ECE approval), a rather low failure rate of just over 22% based on 18 total NHTSA tests inspires some confidence in the brand.

No tests in recent years have flagged any issues, but circa 2014, the NHTSA did note a test issue for Scorpion EXO helmets. That model failed one element of the impact test, while an older version of a similar model had multiple impact failures. Times may have changed, but we'd like to see more data to really be sure.

Given the low overall failure rate, availability of a decent amount of tests, and no new failed tests, Scorpion seems like it's a middling brand we might take a chance on for motorcycle helmets. It also doesn't hurt that Scorpion helmets are very affordable, starting at around \$110; you can find Scorpion helmets on Amazon.

6. Simpson

Simpson Motorcycle Helmets



Simpson motorcycle helmets had the most safety certifications of any of the most popular brands, but it couldn't quite scale to the top of our list for a few reasons. We bumped Simpson ahead of other competitive motorcycle helmet brands because it offers helmets with DOT, ECE, Snell, SFI, FIA, and CMR standards.

While Simpson doesn't explain all of its ratings, Snell, for example, is a well-known non-profit certification body. Simpson notes that its helmets are certified to Snell SA2020, which denotes motorcycle helmets suitable for use in competitive automotive sports. Such compliance suggests that Simpson's helmets could be safer than a range of other helmets on our list.

That said, Simpson's helmets are not as well-tested as other brands in terms of NHTSA compliance. With only four tests, and all four failing due to issues like penetration and retention tests, and labeling, it's hard to put 100% confidence in Simpson's products without further proof of safety.

5. Schuberth

Schuberth



(Continued on page 11)



Helmets Continued...

Schuberth is another helmet brand with a variety of certifications, depending on the helmet you choose.

Most Schuberth helmets appear to meet DOT and ECE standards, while some meet others like S.R.S. and P/J. P/J is of particular interest because this rating means the helmet is certified for safety as both a full-face helmet (P) and an open-face helmet (J). However, the NHTSA declares that "a full-face design is a good indicator of a safe helmet," suggesting that modular designs are not ideal.

While all brands provide warranty coverage against manufacturing defects, only a few select brands go beyond that minimum and offer replacement coverage if your helmet is in an accident. Schuberth is one of them. The company offers a replacement program where you pay one-third of the cost of a new helmet.

Because Schuberth offers multi-compliant helmets, only had labeling failures in its NHTSA tests, and offers a comprehensive post-accident replacement program, it ranks more toward the best than the worst on our list.

4. BILT by Cycle Gear

BILT

There are many places to find motorcycle gear on a budget, and Cycle Gear has a reputation for being one of them. Full-face BILT helmets start at under \$100 and range to around \$300, making for a decent entry-level option for motorcyclists on a budget.

BILT also makes a commitment to meeting DOT and ECE 22.05 standards, which check the basic boxes. What's more, BILT performs fairly well in compliance testing, with only one failure related to labeling out of five tests. In terms of penetration and impact tests, BILT's motorcycle helmets did well.

Note that not all of BILT's helmets are full-face, so not all of the NHTSA tests were on full-face helmet models. Still, none had performance-related failures noted. While we'd like to see more testing for reassurance, a 20% failure rate solely related to labeling concerns isn't the worst on our list by far.

3. Bell

Bell Helmets

Easily one of the most recognizable names in motorcycle helmets, Bell has a positive reputation overall and did well



in our NHTSA results comparison. Not only did the NHTSA run 31 tests on Bell helmets, but the brand performed exceedingly well with a failure rate under 20%.

As far as standards, Bell only confirms that it meets DOT and ECE, but its performance in the NHTSA testing speaks for itself. Most of the compliance test issues were related to labeling failures, with low odds of impact failures given the NHTSA's data.

In addition to its overall positive track record with performance, Bell is also one of only two big-name motorcycle helmet brands with a discount offer if you get in an accident. The company notes that if your motorcycle (or bike) helmet is involved in an accident, you might be eligible for a discount on a new Bell helmet. While it doesn't cost a whole lot to buy a brand-new Bell helmet — prices start at around \$130 — it's just one more thing Bell does to set itself apart.



2. Shoei

Shoei Helmets

Shoei is a highly

ranked motorcycle helmet brand on our list because of its multiple certifications and low failure rate. Shoei helmets are, of course, DOT compliant as a baseline, but the company also has Snell certification on many of its helmets.

While some lower-priced models (the RF-SR at \$400, for example) are DOT only, higher-end models like the X-FIFTEEN are DOT, ECE, and Snell M2020R certified. M2020R is Snell's general motorcycle helmet for public sale designation, but this shows that Shoei goes above and beyond the minimum.

Shelling out \$900 or more for a helmet is quite a hefty expense, but based on the NHTSA's testing, Shoei achieved a failure rate of just under 18%. Relatively few helmets had impact failures, and most test flags were related to labeling. Overall, the odds of any failure are relatively low; Shoei had the lowest failure rating of any motorcycle helmet we looked at. Even better, the brand is available on Amazon.

(Continued on page 11)



Helmets Continued...



1. Arai

Arai

Based on our review of the NHTSA compliance database and major helmet manufacturer brands' safety standards, Arai is the absolute best motorcycle helmet brand. Not only does Arai conform to DOT and ECE standards, but hundreds of its motorcycle and motocross helmets are Snell-certified, as confirmed by Snell's database.

In the NHTSA database, Arai had a failure rate of around 23%, which wasn't the absolute rock-bottom lowest. Yet combined with Arai's commitment to improving safety and meeting various industry stand-

ards, the figure doesn't look so bad — especially because most failures were related to labeling.

Arai has the best full-face helmet money can buy, and you'll need a lot of it for the Corsair-X. That said, most helmets last around five years, but Arai's can last for seven. Plus, Arai dedicates a lot of energy to improving helmet safety, as the brand explains on its website. Its technical philosophy? "At Arai, safety standards such as Snell and DOT are our starting point, not our end goal."

It's still a good idea to wear full gear (and take a motorcycle safety course), but a safe helmet goes a long way toward protecting you on your bike.



Methodology

Ride Icon

Our methodology surveyed two main elements to determine motorcycle helmet brand quality. First, we explored the compliance of each brand as determined by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, based on the NHTSA's compliance database for motorcycle helmet compliance test reports.

We looked at not only the number of failed tests but also the nature of those tests. Helmet brands that had many failures related to safety issues were considered worse, while those with labeling or other cosmetic issues were considered better. No brand has a completely perfect record, and even helmets that had some failures also succeeded in other areas of testing. Because the testing is judged as pass fail with the NHTSA, we do not have specific data relating to the areas in which any one helmet brand succeeded, except to say that it didn't fail.

Next, we considered each helmet brand's adherence to various industry safety standards. Brands that went above and beyond were moved up the quality list for having stricter and a variety of safety controls. For example, all helmets in the United States must meet DOT (Department of Transportation) standards. However, Snell (an independent, non-profit standard-determining body) and ECE (a European standard) are not. When a manufacturer goes beyond the minimum, that's a plus in our book.



Santa knows now too...
Ask him to bring you the helmet of
your choice...
and enjoy your Ride!
Looks like Santa's got it right!



RIDE SAFE and VOTE, VOTE, VOTE!



The most important thing we do in Top Cats is safe riding. The second most important thing we do is smart voting. Our riding season has been a safe one and now it's time to vote in our annual Club elections. The Board of Directors approved the slate. **Voting will occur at our 2 December General Meeting.** For the 2026 - 2028 term, consistent with our By Laws, we have the following positions open for a two – year term.

<u>Vice President (2026-2028):</u>	<u>(Current nominee - Bozena Hasztrakiewicz)</u>
<u>Treasurer (2026-2028):</u>	<u>(Current Nominee - Karin Toth)</u>
<u>Secretary (2026-2028)</u>	<u>(Current Nominee - Jane Smith)</u>
<u>Director, Membership (2026-2028):</u>	<u>(Current nominee - Mary Kirkpatrick)</u>
<u>Director, Activities (2026-2028):</u>	<u>(Current nominee - Mike Bradbury)</u>

Remember, to be eligible to hold office and to vote, you must be a Member in Good Standing. That requires that you meet the following requirements by November 30th of each calendar year. (New members will become eligible to vote following their 12 month probationary status.)

- ▶ Attend a minimum of 5, official Top Cats events per year.
- ▶ Attend the Group Riding and Safety Seminar within your first year then once every year of membership.
- ▶ All dues or any other financial obligations have been met.

Our candidates have demonstrated the passion and the leadership to continue to take Top Cats forward into the next two riding seasons. Following elections, please congratulate our new Board members.

NISRA Banquet!

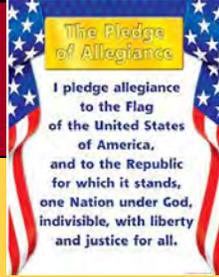


A great event with so many wonderful moments! The NISRA models always make the day! Hope that the results brings many new events for them!

STURGIS... THE LAST WORD - FOR NOW!



Remember, life is like one tank of gas....it eventually runs out and it's up to us to decide how to use it. We can burn fuel idling or we can ride through life with a wide – open throttle...



General Membership Meeting Minutes November 4th, 2025

Respectfully Submitted
by: Jane Smith

President's Section: Gene Rigsby

- Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Guests - None

Announcements – Birthdays/Anniversaries

- November 2 – Bill Fulton
- November 5 – Mike Bradbury
- November 7 – Andy Hay
- November 8 – Patrick Thielan
- November 16 – Mark Sullivan

Vice President: Bozena Haszlkiewicz

- In the process of planning the 30th anniversary celebration for the club. Some kind of event will take place in May. If anyone has pictures from the past 30 years, please let her know. Gene mentioned he has pictures from the last anniversary event so will get those to her.

Past President: Wayne Kirkpatrick

- Voting for some of the Board members will take place at the December general meeting. In order to be in compliance with our constitution, we must be able to fill all the vacant positions. If we can't, we will need to file an amendment to or reestablish our constitution.
- Positions up for elections are:
 - ◊ Vice President
 - ◊ Secretary
 - ◊ Treasurer
 - ◊ Director (Charity)
 - ◊ Director (Safety)
- Things have been going well at WSHD since new owners have taken over. However, two managers have been let go. They also are able to negotiate better prices on bikes.

Safety: Mike Bradbury

- Kaution Korner
- Mike reviewed his Kaution Korner article in the November Roar about challenges faced by older motorcyclists.
- Also, Wayne mentions some helpful hints on Autumn riding in his Oil Spots article in the November Roar. Check both articles out for some good reminders.
- A Road Captain meeting will be scheduled in early 2026. If you are interested in becoming a road captain, please join us.

Membership and Products: Ted Makarewicz

- Ted reminded everyone about ordering on the Land's End website for Top Cats merchandise. If you need help, please reach out to him.

- A new patch to honor our 30th anniversary will be coming out soon.

Activities: Greg Smith

- Recent Activities:
 - ◊ October 11 – Bob's Bitchin BBQ (Gene). Leisurely ride to Dodgeville, WI for lunch at the restaurant. Weather was great!
- Future Activities:
 - ◊ November 22 – NISRA Fashion Show (Jim W and Mary). Annual NISRA lunch banquet held at Crystal Lake Holiday Inn featuring raffle baskets, themed Christmas trees with gifts included valued at \$2,500 each, and a NISRA participant fashion show. Top Cats have reserved a table for anyone interested in going. There are still a couple seats left at TC table. Tickets are \$75/ea.
 - ◊ December 7 – Toys 4 Tots (Ted) This is a weather dependent event. Ted has found a new breakfast spot for us to meet (The Breakfast Club), have breakfast and then proceed to the toy drop-off in Chicago. Watch for more details on this.
 - ◊ January 18 – Hot Dog/Movie Night (Greg). We will meet at the Barrington Keller Williams office for some Chicago dogs and a classic movie with our fellow TC members. More details will be coming.
 - ◊ February 15 – Top Cats Annual Awards Banquet. SAVE THE DATE. More information will be forthcoming.

Charity: Mary Kirkpatrick

- Nothing for now. Will start planning in a few months.

50/50 Raffle: Andy Haszlkiewicz

- Raffle won by Gene and he donated his winnings to the club.

Other:

- November 8 – Wayne mentioned in honor of Veteran's Day Rolling Thunder will be conducting a "Stand To" at Woodstock HD at 10:00 am. Speaker will be Dr. Robert Buckley, Director of Captain James A. Lovell Health Care Center. Several families of previous MIA repatriations will also be attending. All are invited.

Meeting was adjourned by Gene at 7:45PM



BOARD MEETING MINUTES NOVEMBER 11TH, 2023

Respectfully Submitted
by: Jane Smith

President's Section: Gene Rigsby

- The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. via Zoom. All Board members were present except for Bozena, Ted, and Mary. The meeting was rescheduled to Wednesday because of some of the board members' commitments to Veteran's Day events on Tuesday.

Vice President: Bozena Haszlkiewicz (Absent)

No report.

Past President: Wayne Kirkpatrick

- The slate for the upcoming election is ready except for the office of Treasurer. Wayne had asked Andy if he would consider running but he has commitments with American Legion. Wayne has approached one of our new members, Karin Toth, to step in for one year. She currently takes care of the books at her work so is familiar with finance. She has agreed to fill this position for us. Wayne made a motion that we waive the one-year requirement in this case. Gene seconded the motion. The motion was approved. Karin will be added to the slate for a one-year term.
- Our good relationship with WSHD continues. They were very supportive of the Rolling Thunder Stand To this past Saturday and looking forward to supporting our other activities.
- Wayne has been having difficulty receiving blasts. Can this be looked into?

Treasurer: Don DeLardo (Absent)

- Don was absent from the meeting but did email the Board his Financial Statements the next day. Both accounts are in good shape right now with membership dues and charity donation deposits.

Activities: Greg Smith

Future Events:

- November 22 – NISRA Lunch and Fashion Show. A table for Top Cats is reserved for the event. There are a few seats left if interested. Tickets are \$75.
- December 7 - Toys 4 Tots (Ted). Traditionally we meet for breakfast and then travel to the parade route (in Chicago) and drop off our toys Ted has found a new breakfast spot for us to meet. More info will be forthcoming.
- January 18 – Chicago Dogs and Movie (Greg). Planning an afternoon enjoying some hot dogs and a movie at the Keller Williams office in Barrington (usual GRASS location). More info will be forthcoming.
- February 15 – 2026 Awards Banquet. Greg compared prices from Emmett's in Palatine and a new

venue, Grand Victoria Casino in Elgin. Emmett's price would be \$52.00/per person. The Casino would be \$38.00/per person. They are willing to work with us on this price if we are a 501(C)3 organization. A discussion was had as to whether we are a 501(C)3 and have a letter or was this changed several years ago to a 503(C)7. We will investigate this further, so we know for sure for the future. Regardless of whether TC is a 501(C)3 or 503(C)7 a motion was made to choose the Casino for the Banquet this year – Mike seconded. Motion passed. Greg will send out the menu choices from the Casino to the Board and ask for their choices.

- We need some more activity ideas for the winter months to keep us all in contact with each other. Wayne suggested we meet at the H-D Museum in Milwaukee for lunch and tour. Greg will check on hours, etc. for an event in March.

Safety/RC: Mike Bradbury

- A GRASS class has been scheduled for March 1, 2026, at the Keller Williams office in Barrington. Mike will create an agenda and schedule for the class.
- Mike will make a schedule for the monthly Kaution Korner for 2026.

Membership/Products: Ted Makarewicz (Absent)

No report

Charity: Mary Kirkpatrick (Absent)

No report

Secretary: Jane Smith

No comments.

Meeting adjourned by Gene at 7:46 p.m.





Gifts to think about for the Holidays coming up...



Personalized Bobble Head.
<https://www.dolls2u.com/motorcycle-rider-p-15615.html>

1. Upload or email your pictures
 2. Select the options
 3. Confirm your order
- Prices Vary!

Etsy... \$13.95



Beer Barrell \$155 or
Brandy Decanter \$79 - Amazon



Tire Tread Ring
Motoloot.com
\$39.99

Motorcycle Bike wing Ring
BikeChainJewelry.com
\$23.00



December Birthdays and Anniversaries!



No Birthdays!

Happy Days to our Top Cats Celebrities for December!!
Let us know your special dates so that we can celebrate with you!

No December Anniversaries

(That we know of...)



*Top Cats Buy, Sell, Trade....
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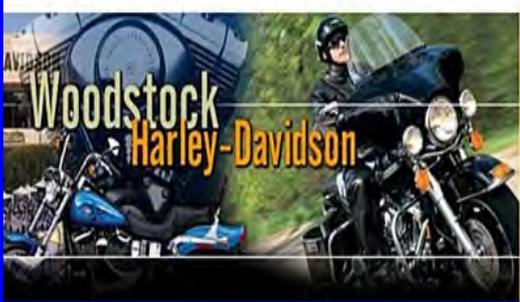


*Network with your fellow
Riders here...*

And Be Thankful!



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Woodstock HD and Staff Support our Top Cat's Ride, Rock Rumble Charity Ride!

[Knight Performance \(Harleys only\)](#)

Contact: **Eric Knight**

304 N. Johnson St

Harvard, IL 60033

ericknight1@hotmail.com

(815) 770-0302

[TAK MC \(Primarily Harleys\)](#)

Contact: **Tim Harwood**

28841 N. Darrell Road

McHenry, IL 60051

timharwood11@yahoo.com

(708) 525-6316

[WAR Performance \(All makes plus dyno and storage\)](#)

Contact: **Mike Witt**

120 Grant Highway

Marengo, IL 60152

Membership Has Its Privileges!

All suppliers and vendors who support the Top Cats by providing discounts to Top Cats members will be listed in ROAR.

Sign-up your favorite merchant today!

GRASS Classes are held at the Keller-Williams Offices!

Thanks, Greg for supporting our Top Cat's Safety Class!



Greg Smith

Keller - Williams Success Realty

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Barrington, IL 60010

847.870.0957

Have one of our own Top Cats work with you to buy or sell your home!

NISRA Families have so many wonderful opportunities because of the NISRA staff... Can we find ways to continue to help them?





RIDES & EVENTS

Date	Ride/Event	Location	Destination	Time	Leader
Sunday, December 2nd	General Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, December 7th	Toys 4 Tots	The Copernicus Foundation	Toys and Podhalanka	9:30 am	Makarewicz
Tuesday, December 9th	Board Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, January 6th	General Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, January 13th	Board Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, January 16th	Classic Movie and Chicago Dogs	Barrington	Keller Williams 600 Hart Rd	4:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, February 3rd	General Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Saturday, February 10th	Board Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Sunday, February 15th	TC Banquet	Palatine	Emmets	5:00 pm	Smith/ DeLordo

All ride and event information along with the Photo Gallery can be found at www.TopCats.org.



Barrington Library

Location and Hours

505 N. Northwest Highway
Barrington, IL 60010

847-382-1300
balibrary.org

See the Top Cats Archive

FREE ADVERTISING in ROAR for TOP CATS Business Owners

Attention all Top Cats business owners!

As part of our ongoing philosophy to support our members and goal to provide a more value-rich publication, we are now offering free advertising space in ROAR for Top Cats business owners. Each business owner can submit advertising content and graphics up to 2 X 3.5 inches (Business Card size) for their company.

We will run the ad for 3 months after which you will need to resubmit it.

This offer is for Top Cats business owners only. We are not accepting advertising for other businesses at this time.

Submit your ad along with contact information to the ROAR editors at ROAR@TOPCATS.org



ROAR



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For more information about the Top Cats visit our website at www.TopCats.org

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