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New Motorcycle Sales Top One Million for Record Sixth Consecutive Year
- Scooter Sales Reach All-Time High of 222,000 -

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 13, 2009 – Despite the economy, U.S. sales of new motorcycles in 2008 still topped the one-million mark, and did so for the sixth straight year. That beats the longest run of million-plus sales ever recorded by the Motorcycle Industry Council, during the five years from 1970 to 1974. Also, scooter sales last year reached their highest annual level ever.

The MIC's preliminary estimate for all motorcycles and scooters sold nationwide in 2008 is 1,087,000, down just 3.3 percent compared to 2007.

However, the final 2008 figure will be determined later this year as the MIC factors in distributors and manufacturers who do not provide their monthly sales figures to the association. And, in recent years, there have been many non-reporting new entrants to the U.S. market.

The 12 major brands that do participate in the monthly MIC Retail Sales Report are: BMW, Can-Am, Ducati, Harley-Davidson/Buell, Honda, Kawasaki, KTM, the Piaggio Group, Victory, Suzuki, Triumph and Yamaha. Thus, the report provides an indicator of market trends. Midyear, a final MIC estimate is determined after surveying dozens of additional brands.

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The MIC is currently estimating 2008 scooter sales at 222,000, a new record. Back in 1992, total motorcycle and scooter sales combined were just 278,000. Further demonstrating strong interest in affordable, fuel-efficient bikes, 2008 retail sales numbers for dual-purpose motorcycles were at 48,000, their highest levels in nearly a quarter century.

“There’s no doubt that these are changing, challenging times for many people nationwide and many in our industry,” said MIC President Tim Buche. “It’s still impressive that last year, more than one million times, customers came into dealerships and rode home with great new bikes. There are some in the motorcycle business who are thriving, from certain bike manufacturers to various aftermarket firms, making products that fit the marketplace today. All in all, our industry has not declined as precipitously as many others. Many Americans certainly want motorcycles, both for recreation and transportation. When they aren’t buying now, it’s down to personal economics, not desire.”

While total sales have declined slightly during the past two years, they are following in the tracks of some very big years. There were 1,124,000 new bikes sold in 2007. In 2006, that number was 1,190,000, the biggest year for motorcycle sales in more than three decades. The record for most new bikes sold in a year is 1.5 million, back in 1973.

“We’ve recently gained many new customers who were looking to smart-size their lives,” Buche said. “Down the road, that’s good because many of them will discover that motorcycles offer them far more than alternative transportation. And they’ll still be motorcyclists long after this recession ends.”

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The Motorcycle Industry Council exists to preserve, protect and promote motorcycling through government relations, communications and media relations, statistics and research, aftermarket programs, development of data communications standards, and activities surrounding technical and regulatory issues. It is a not-for-profit, national trade association representing manufacturers and distributors of motorcycles, scooters, motorcycle/ATV/ROV parts and accessories, and members of allied trades such as publishing companies, advertising agencies, insurance firms and consultants. The MIC is headquartered in Irvine, Calif., with a government relations office adjacent to Washington, D.C. First called the MIC in 1970, the organization has been in operation since 1914.

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