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New Motorcycle Sales Decline in First Quarter of 2009

IRVINE, Calif., April 23, 2009 - The economy affected U.S. sales of new motorcycles in the first quarter of 2009, down a total of 30.5 percent, compared to the same period last year, among 12 of the leading brands. Generally affordable, fuel-efficient dual-purpose motorcycles declined the least, by 24 percent. The off-highway market went down the most, by 39.7 percent, some of which is linked to the government's ban on youth models due to a controversial new law regarding lead content in consumer products.

"There are still many customers wanting new motorcycles, both veteran riders and those wanting to join in the fun and gain the benefits," said Tim Buche, president of the Motorcycle Industry Council. "But, in reaction to the economy, there have been some production cuts. And the lead ban turned many parents away from buying new dirt bikes for their kids. There's a need for wholesale financing to help keep dealerships supplied with inventory, and a need for consumer credit to loosen up so that dealerships can get those new bikes out on the roads and on the trails. It's very hard to get retail financing now, even if you have good credit."

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The early year sales decline follows a relatively flat year for motorcycles. 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. Sales still topped the one-million mark, and did so for the sixth straight year. That beat the longest run of million-plus sales ever recorded by the MIC, during the five years from 1970 to 1974. Also, scooter sales last year reached their highest annual level ever, currently estimated at 222,000. Among the major brands, scooter sales through the first quarter of 2009 were down 36.7 percent compared to the first three months of 2008. The on-highway market declined by 27.3 percent.

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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