ANY QUESTION ANSWERED

If we don't know the answer, we'll find the person who does

Send your questions to: advice@motorcyclenews.com or 01733-468002

Q My MV is flash – but not in a good way!

If you are lucky disconnecting the battery will cure your electrical woes

I recently purchased a 58-plate MV Brutale 910 with just 28 miles on the clock that hadn't run for ages. When I went to look at the bike we jump-started it from my VW Transporter's battery and it fired up promptly. The second time I came to start it after charging the battery overnight, all four indicators started flashing, and continued to do so even with the ignition off. They only stopped when I disconnected the battery. Can you suggest what is the most likely problem?
Bruce Hosie, Bristol

A Answered by Dave Martin, Moto Corsa

A flat battery is 'hungry' for charge and if you connect an 8 Amp Hour (AH) motorcycle battery to a 90AH van battery it will take what's on offer, but that surge of current is going to knock the battery over like an Anthony Joshua upper cut and give the ECU a bad day at the office as well.

The first step is to disconnect the battery and leave it off for a few days. The reason is that the capacitors in the ECU sometimes stay 'high' with the residual current and maintain the microprocessor in the same state, but over a couple of days they will discharge completely. Garmin satnavs can suffer the same issue and taking the battery out clears them.

Although the bike has started up again on that battery, I'd park it and get a new battery while the capacitors are powering down, as that jolt of current could have damaged the plates. If it's still got the same issues it's sometimes possible to reflash an ECU, depending on the damage.

Q How can I fix a badly chewed Allen bolt?

I have to replace the fork seals on my Honda CBF125, but someone's been in there before me and the Allen bolt on the end of the damper rod has rounded out so my Allen key just spins around.
Charles Marsh, email

A Answered by Chris Dabbs, MCN

Torx bits have plenty of sharp edges that can grip the inside of a worn Allen socket. Get one that is slightly bigger than the rounded-out socket and hammer it in gently, keeping it square on, so that it grips the rod. You should then be able to unscrew it.

If that doesn't work you will have to drill out the bolt head, starting with a small drill, then working up gradually until the head comes off. You can then use molegrips on the 15mm of shaft that is left before replacing it with a new bolt.

Q What's the best way to get a grip for medium miles?

I am not sure what type of rubber to use next on my 2011 ZZR1400. My annual mileage is about 2500-3000 miles, not great, but includes brisk riding and making progress as I am in the midst of doing my IAM. Do I stay with a sports tyre or go towards sports-touring instead?
Steve Eagle, email

A Answered by Bryn Phillips, Cambrian Tyres

Because of your annual mileage you could go either way. If you do choose to move to sports-touring tyres you will more than likely notice a small reduction in handling response, but the latest sports-touring tyres are much better in this respect, and you will get superior tread life, smoother ride comfort and generally speaking, improved wet grip. Many people ask us for GT-spec sports-touring tyres for the ZZR1400, i.e. the spec for heavier bikes, but the tyre firms do not consider the bike a heavy tourer and all of the sports-touring tyres listed above are standard specification.

Go with sports-touring rubber for a wide choice, long life and excellent feel

KIT CHOOSER

Q What's the best phone mount for my CBR?

I'd like to use my phone as a satnav and also to see if anyone is calling so I'm after a phone holder for my CBR600.
Josh Harvey, Hull

A Answered by Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles

If you have an iPhone there are quite a few choices, and some Samsungs have bespoke cases available as well. SW Motech offer a specific case for some models of both and you will need the correct mount, which is about £65. From about £70 the Twisty ride system covers similar models. You can use a Ram mounting system on its own and depending on which options you choose (you will need three components) they will cost around £70 but the phone is exposed to the elements. The stem mount is probably our most popular in this range and is good with bikes like yours. The basic Oxford Dryphone is more suited to handlebar applications but could be worth playing with for an affordable £24.99.

FROM £55

SW Motech

FROM £70

Twisty Ride

£24.99

Oxford Dryphone

MCN LAW
Your legal questions

Q Van man ran me over, but can I claim?

I pulled up behind a van which was on the right-hand arm of a rural Y-junction. The van driver then seemingly decided he wanted to go down the other arm of the Y, started reversing and only stopped when he felt the van hit the front of my bike – despite some frantic beeping of my bike's horn. I was not injured, but the bike was forced onto its side and had some cosmetic damage. The driver said he didn't see me, but where do I stand?
Archie Graham, Keswick

> 'Where a van has a solid rear door a court may criticise a rider who pulls up too close'

A It would seem that one of two things happened to cause this accident. Either you were there to be seen but the van driver didn't check his mirrors. Or that there was a solid back to the van and he did check his side mirrors but in the absence of being able to check a rear-view mirror you weren't there to be seen even though he looked.

If it's the former then it would seem that a court must conclude that he was entirely at fault.

Where a vehicle has a solid back, the court may well criticise a rider who pulls up so closely behind it rather than positioning himself on the road in a place where he could be seen in the side mirror – as with a lorry, if you can't see the mirrors then the driver can't see you.

The end result would likely be a finding that the van driver was primarily to blame but there may be a degree of contributory negligence on your part, which could effect any settlement. But this is unlikely and I would need more information to be sure.

Andrew Campbell
Solicitor and author of the MCN Law column for the last five years

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EXPERT'S GUIDE TO BRAKE PADS

Tucked away inside your calipers, they have as much work to do as your engine

THE EXPERT

Adam Freeman
Head of Projects and Engineering at EBC Brakes. Adam has completed a four-year masters degree in engineering and has also worked with his father – who founded EBC brakes – and with the company's current motorcycle brakes guru Jon Wright.

Brake pad basics
A brake pad comprises friction material attached to a back plate. Slotted into a brake caliper, the pads are squeezed against the brake disc to slow your bike. Different compounds and spec are used depending on what sort of bike you are riding (see below).

EBC's semi-sintered V-Pads have copper mixed in and are used in rear brakes on heavy bikes

Organic pads have Kevlar mixed in and offer better feel than sintered

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW...

What are the different pad materials?
Brake pads for motorcycles split into two distinct groups, sintered and organic. Their methods of production are very different but despite market sentiment, organic pads have recently become very much a contender in terms of wear and performance to sintered, except maybe for short circuit racing.

Organic material
From the heady days where asbestos was used in brakes, new fibres have allowed development of organics to very high performance levels. EBC, for example, have never used asbestos and always use Kevlar in motorcycle organics. These fibres include a blend of naturally mined ores, non-ferrous metals and friction-enhancing additives bound in a resin matrix and are well worth consideration as a replacement even for sintered pads.

Recent ECE R90 brake safety regulations tested both compounds and EBC are one of the few brands who have passed with both their organic and sintered pads; essentially making them equivalent to each other.

The advantages of organic pads over sintered are that they are cooler in operation, produce less disc wear, are usually quieter and deliver a 'feel' many riders prefer – although they may wear slightly faster than sintered equivalents.

Another benefit of the EBC organic pad is that they have all been built for several years now using the Canadian patented NRS hook attachment process where a Velcro-like hook pattern is slide formed onto the backing plate to enhance material bonding.

Sintered metal
As a blend of non-ferrous elements, mainly copper and carbon, sintered pads are fitted to most bigger bikes as original equipment mainly due to their longer wear rates. They are generally rated with higher friction but of course a friction indicator is not proof of the braking torque that a brake material can develop.

Sintered pads tend also to run slightly hotter than organics and hence almost all sintered pads feature a backing/cooling shim or in some cases a ceramic backing sprayed on to the pad to reduce heat transfer. This is because copper gets hotter and stays hot longer than an organic pad. The biggest advantage of a sintered pad is its better heat cycling ability under extreme use such as racing.

That said, most sintered pads are not suitable for track use. EBC produce two grades of sintered pad above their standard road sintered pads and I strongly recommend using only those on the track. These are the EBC EPFA and GPFAX race compounds.

Sintered pads offer a longer life than organic pads

What about 'semi-sintered'?
Two years ago EBC launched their V-Pad range which they call a semi-sintered because they contain a quantity of copper fibre dust to enhance wear and brake torque. These pads have quickly become almost standard fitment on rear brakes and all round fitment on larger heavy cruisers and are also ECE R90 test approved.

Next week
The science of brake discs