

Dated: May 19, 1999.

Joel C. Richard,

Secretary, Maritime Administration,
Department of Transportation.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA 99-5698; Notice 1]

American Honda Motor Company, Inc.; Receipt of Application for Second Renewal of Temporary Exemption From Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 122

We are seeking comments on the application by American Honda Motor Co., Inc., of Torrance, California ("Honda"), for a second renewal of its temporary exemption from the fade and water recovery requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 122 *Motorcycle brake systems*. Honda asserts that an exemption would make easier the development or field evaluation of a new motor vehicle safety feature providing a safety level at least equal to the safety level of the standard.

We are publishing this notice of receipt of the application in accordance with the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 30113(b)(2). This action does not represent that we have made any judgment on the merits of the application.

The discussion that follows is based on information contained in Honda's application.

Why Honda Needs Again To Renew Its Temporary Exemption To Make Easier the Development or Field Evaluation of a New Motor Vehicle Safety Feature Providing a Safety Level at Least Equal to the Safety Level of Standard No. 122

We previously granted Honda NHTSA Temporary Exemption No. 97-1, expiring September 1, 1998, from the following requirements of 49 CFR 571.122 Standard No. 122 *Motorcycle brake systems*: S5.4.1 Baseline check—minimum and maximum pedal forces, S5.4.2 Fade, S5.4.3 Fade recovery, S5.7.2 Water recovery test, and S6.10 Brake actuation forces (62 FR 52372, October 7, 1997). This exemption covered Honda's 1998 CBR1100XX motorcycle. Honda later applied for an extension of its exemption to September 1, 1999, to cover the 1999 model CBR1100XX motorcycle. This request was also granted (63 FR 65272, November 25, 1998). Now Honda has applied for the exemption to continue

for another year to cover the 2000 model CBR1100XX motorcycle. The 2000 model of the CBR1100XX will be mechanically identical to the 1999 model. Under Temporary Exemption No. 97-1, Honda has sold far less than 2,500 exempted 1998 and 1999 model CBR1100XX motorcycles.

Honda's original and renewed requests concern exemption "from the requirement of the minimum hand-lever force of five pounds in the base line check for the fade and water recovery tests." The company continues to evaluate the marketability of an "improved" motorcycle brake system setting which is currently applied to the model sold in Europe. The difference in setting is limited to a softer master cylinder return spring in the European version. Using the softer spring results in a "more predictable (linear) feeling during initial brake lever application," and "allows a more predictable rise in brake gain." Honda considers that motorcycle brake systems have continued to evolve and improve since Standard No. 122 was adopted in 1972, and that one area of improvement is brake lever force which has gradually been reduced. However, the five-pound minimum specification "is preventing further development and improvement" of brake system characteristics. This limit, when applied to the CBR1100XX "results in an imprecise feeling when the rider applies low-level front brake lever inputs."

On November 5, 1997, Honda submitted a petition for rulemaking to amend Standard No. 122 to eliminate the minimum brake actuation force requirement. We granted Honda's rulemaking petition on March 16, 1999. Honda interprets this action as "signifying that the agency believes a further review of the issues raised in the petition appears to have merit."

The CBR1100XX is equipped with Honda's Linked Brake System (LBS) which is designed to engage both front and rear brakes when either the front brake lever or the rear brake pedal is used. The LBS differs from other integrated systems in that it allows the rider to choose which wheel gets the majority of braking force, depending on which brake control the rider uses.

According to Honda, the overall braking performance remains unchanged from a conforming motorcycle. Exempted CBR1100XX vehicles meet "the stopping distance requirement but at lever forces slightly below the minimum."

Honda's Reasons Why a Temporary Exemption Is in the Public Interest and Consistent With Objectives of Motor Vehicle Safety

Honda argued in 1997 that granting an exemption would be in the public interest and consistent with objectives of traffic safety because it

* * * should improve a rider's ability to precisely modulate the brake force at low-level brake lever input forces. Improving the predictability, even at very low-level brake lever input, increases the rider's confidence in the motorcycle's brake system.

Honda repeated those arguments in 1998 and 1999. It has asserted that a renewal allows further refinement and development of the LBS. It believes that the LBS has "many desirable characteristics—especially during emergency braking—that could reduce the number of rear brake lock-up crashes."

How To Comment on Honda's Application

If you wish to comment on Honda's application, please do so in writing, referring to the docket number and the notice number, and send two copies to: Docket Management, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590.

We shall consider all comments received before the close of business on the comment closing date indicated below. All comments will be available for examination in the docket in Room PL-401 both before and after that date. To the extent possible, we shall also consider comments filed after the closing date. When the Administrator has made a decision, we shall publish it in the **Federal Register** pursuant to the authority indicated below.

Comment closing date: June 23, 1999. (49 U.S.C. 30113; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8)

Issued on May 18, 1999.

L. Robert Shelton,

Associate Administrator for Safety
Performance Standards.

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