Biker Buddy P1 Headlight Modulator

Who's Your Buddy?

BY TRICIA SZULEWSKI

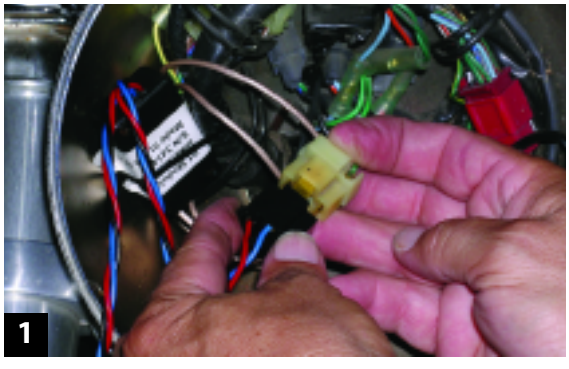
Here's a fact that all road bikers should be aware of: most multivehicle motorcycle accidents occur at intersections, and most of those are a result of an oncoming vehicle turning into the lane of the "I didn't see it" motorcycle. Making ourselves more visible is a key strategy in street safety. Besides wearing bright colors, using reflectors, and abiding by appropriately timed following distances, there is more we can do to increase our ability to be seen. We can modify our motorcycles.

I'm not talking about installing ear-splitting exhaust pipes, which haven't been proven to increase our safety margin. I'm referring to silent, but noticeable, headlight modulators. You know, those gadgets that cause your bike's headlight to shine from bright to dim to bright to dim in an endlessly repetitive fashion. Whether you find this flashing annoying or not, it's a fact that flashing lights are more noticeable than constant, steady lights. Ever notice that police cars, ambulances, airplanes, and the like all have flashing lights?

There are a number of headlight modulators for motorcycles available, ranging in price from $30 to $170. Some modulators offer features such as light sensitivity adjustments and on/off switches, and Custom Dynamics' Diamond Star unit even offers an emergency "heads up" series of flashes that are incorporated into the horn button. Some modulators splice into your bike's headlight wiring, and others, like the midpriced Biker Buddy P1, are designed to plug and play. The P1 is engaged when the high beam is activated, and the daylight sensor unit captures the appropriate amount of daylight. Obviously, no one wants a flashing headlight after dark, plus it's illegal to operate a modulator at night. The law also requires no more than 240 cycles per minute, which is about four flashes per second. Maximum load on the P1 is 110 watts, which will work with most modern motorcycles.

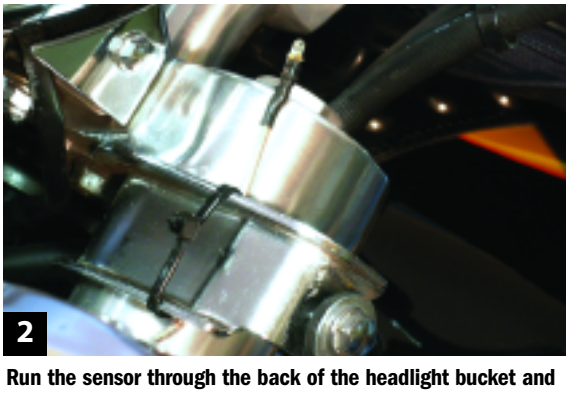
We decided to mount the Biker Buddy unit on my dad's Honda Valkyrie to see how it works. The unit really does just plug into the three-pin headlight plug. Most of the installation time was spent removing the windshield, getting into the headlight bucket, and cleaning all those less-traveled places. We ran the photo optic daylight sensor wiring through the bucket, and then thought about where to mount it. It needs to be open to the daylight, with nothing near it to create shadows that may impede the light input. Biker Buddy recommends drilling a small hole in the top section of the Valkyrie's headlight housing to run the sensor through. This is probably a good place, but we decided to try it on the upper triple tree with a zip-tie first, before making the modulator a permanent part of the motorcycle.

We discovered that it's helpful to install and test the sensor in bright daylight. Since we were running behind schedule, the late afternoon sun was skewing our results. A direct flashlight beam to the sensor helped to make sure the unit was operating, but only a real-world test with the sun will tell whether you



1

The Valkyrie's headlight plug is inside the bucket. Simply plug the female connector of the P1 into the stock headlight three-pin plug, zip-tie the unit to the bracket in the headlight shell, and plug the lamp into the male end of the P1 unit.



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Run the sensor through the back of the headlight bucket and secure it to an open area of the bike. We zip-tied ours to the Valkyrie's triple tree for now.

hard data | Biker Buddy | P1 Modulator | $66.96 | www.BikerBuddy.net

We reinstalled everything and tested our unit. When the daylight is bright enough, the modulator flashes from dim ...

... to bright. To turn the modulator off, just switch the headlight to the regular (not high) beam setting.

placed the sensor in a good location. Every bike will be different, but fortunately, Biker Buddy provides more than enough wiring to run from any place we could think of.

Satisfied with the sensor mounted on the mirror stalk, Dad logged plenty of miles with the modulator. Aside from being queried about the legality of the unit, he hasn't reported any problems to date. He's noted that it correctly switches to a steady beam of light for nighttime riding. The only downside of the system is that, from the rider's seat, it's impossible to tell whether the light is modulating during the day. So there's always the potential that the high beam is blinding oncoming cars unless the rider switches back to the low beam position.

Headlight modulators are legal in all 50 states provided they meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards criteria. You can read this information at www.RoadBikeMag.com. You may also want to print it and keep it somewhere on your bike. Not all officers of the law are as educated as we are about our rights and regulations. **RB**