

## BUSINESS

# Motorcycle braking system gives earlier warning when bikes slow down

The Heads-Up Braking System uses brake lights to alert nearby traffic not only when a motorcycle is braking but when it is decelerating, too.

By Neal St. Anthony (<http://www.startribune.com/Neal-St-Antony/10646026/>) Star Tribune

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John J. Henry, a radio operator in the Army 40 years ago, demonstrated a knack for electronics that led eventually to a post-service degree from the old Control Data Institute and a job for several years in the disk drive business of Control Data.

Henry also earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Minnesota and worked for several years as an administrator before departing for a successful career in pharmaceutical sales at Bristol-Myers Squibb.

Henry, an avid motorcycle rider, witnessed a bad accident in 1997 that led to a decade-long quest to design a wireless safety system for riders that advocates hail as an innovative safety breakthrough. It was introduced at retail and on at [headsupbraking.com](http://headsupbraking.com) several months ago at an introductory price of \$259.

"I'm an engineer's nightmare," quipped Henry, 60. "I know just enough because of my electronics background to know what you can and can't do. I wanted to make sure that this product wasn't just a third brake light. It has other features that I knew would be of value."

Henry said he and his wife, Julie, have invested \$1.3 million in cash and time over the last decade to develop, patent and manufacture the product.

The 1997 accident occurred when a trailing motorcyclist struck a lead bike, which was decelerating but did not trigger the brake lights. They only work when the brakes are tapped. Both riders were seriously injured. And there have been other accidents in which a rider at night was struck and killed after leaving the lights-on motorcycle. Car drivers, including some who pulled over to help, didn't see the driver who had separated from the bike.

The simple-to-install Heads-Up Braking (HUB) System illuminates the bike and helmet with "smart illumination" technology that glows when the motorcycle is decelerating or the brake applied, and also when the rider separates from the motorcycle, even if the engine isn't running.



([http://stmedia.startribune.com/images/ows\\_145888342](http://stmedia.startribune.com/images/ows_145888342))  
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John Henry, founder and CEO of Heads-Up Braking System, created his system because of a ba...

“I really am convinced John has a solid market opportunity,” said Dan Cook, president of OPS America, a contract engineering and operations firm that helped Henry get the Heads-Up system engineered, designed and manufactured. “He’s a great guy. He’s got patent protection, and he’s been very methodical.

“He’s probably the biggest perfectionist and most adamant customer about what his product will do. And this product does what he wanted. It turned out to be more sophisticated than any product we’d worked on before. He’s not compromising. We got everything dialed in to his satisfaction. The product also works for snowmobiles and ATVs.”

The challenge now for Henry is to generate excitement in the marketplace. And he doesn’t have much budget for that.

“It’s a great product but trying to get the customer to buy it so far is another thing,” said Randy DuPaul, owner of Dr. Mudspringer, a motorcycle retailer in Spring Lake Park who carries the HUB product. “A lot of motorcycle folks don’t think enough about safety. Not even everybody wears a helmet.

“But it’s a great product, and I stand behind it 100 percent. It’s real technological and safety advancement.

“And it has proximity-sensing feature so when you get away from the motorcycle the helmet lights on its own. It also works while the motorcycle is on a trailer [and not running]. Nobody has anything close to this. John’s heart and soul is in this. And the time, effort and money he and his wife have put into this is phenomenal. I’m rooting for them.”

Henry relishes the recognition as a safety pioneer. But that doesn’t guarantee marketing success. He’s looking for a national distributor.

“I think I’m on the front edge of a new safety technology,” Henry said. “Now we’ve got to get this product rolling.”

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