

MAR 20 2013

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January 29, 2013

National Transportation Safety Board
490L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594

Charlotte, NC 

Dear NTSB:

There is an issue w/ BMW Motorcycles that makes turn signal engagement very difficult. This started in 2010 when BMW started a communication system controller called "Multicontroller".

I started writing and emailing BMW Motorrad in July, less than one month after trading my 2007 BMW for a new 2012 BMW. The new motorcycle has many improvements over the older machines, but turn signals communicate w/ other motorists and help keep riders safe. I do not appreciate my safety being compromised. The BMW response has been a return call from customer service. No response from engineering or an attempt to fix the problem has been offered.

Granted you face much larger issues than a small number of motorcycles, but this should be addressed and corrected by BMW. It is my hope that you can examine the issue, talk w/ BMW and force them to fix this problem.

I've included four letters and emails I've sent to BMW since July 2013.

Yours,
ET
3/21/13
JMD

7/16/12

To: BMW Motorcycles U.S.

From: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Charlotte, NC [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Email:

Dear BMW:

On 6/23 I took delivery of a new 2012 R1200 RT after trading my 2007 R1200 RT at Charlotte BMW. The dealership was very good to work with. However, my opinion of BMW Motorrad has dropped considerably after taking delivery. You've taken a wonderful machine and made it very irritating, if not dangerous, with your controls.

My issues:

1. Turn Signals are now a single switch. The left turn signal may or may not turn on. This is after 1300 miles to date and I should be very familiar with operating procedure. This is a horrible downgrade from the individual paddle switches on the LH and RH side of the handle bars on the 2007. No doubt it's cheaper for you using a single 3 way switch, but it's dangerous to the operator. I have to double check to see if the LH signal is actually on. On my 2007 there was NEVER a question. They were very positive and easy to use, unlike this current downgrade.
2. I've instructed my brother and my lawyer to initiate a lawsuit against you IF something happens to me as a result of a Left Turn. I use turn signals religiously in turns and to change lanes and your LH signal simply does not work consistently. To save a few dollars you've put me in danger.
3. Radio: what a joke. Your control system is too complicated. The instruction manual is confusing and inept at best. Even in manual mode it will change stations if the machine is shut down and restarted. I don't use this while highway riding, but it's nice while in town. Sorta.
4. GPS giveaway was a good promo but had nothing to do w/ my purchase. Your GPS location is designed for 30 year old eyes, not 50+ year old eyes, which is probably your demographic market. Why isn't the GPS on the handlebars or located where it can be read? R1200 RT owners are not kids. The GPS is only good if it can be read.
5. GPS delivery took 3 weeks. On a purchase this size, why wasn't it shipped overnight by BMW? You manufacture a premium product and customers should be treated as such. A company w/ real customer service values customers. Your customer service was hard to contact on the phone and they referred me to the dealer, who actually expedited the GPS. I also emailed the feedback form to you asking to be contacted by BMW corporate. No response whatsoever.
6. Brake fluid / clutch fluid containers look very flimsy. Not solidly mounted like the 2007 design.

7. Fuel capacity is down to 6.6 gallons. I knew that, but purchased anyway. I'm sure it saved you money.
8. Tire pressure sensor: It consistently reads 2-3 lbs. low. Why did you even bother? It's another piece of junk you attached to a wonderful machine.
9. Control panel glare: My 2007 had this problem and the 2012 is no different. Several hours during the day the control panel is barely readable due to glare. This also occurs on the GPS.

In short, I can appreciate holding costs down, but you've made my ride more dangerous. The 2012 R1200 RT rides like my 2007 thankfully, but controls are much worse and actually dangerous in the case of the LH turn signal.

I hope someone from corporate at the BMW MOA meeting in Sedalia will these questions, but I have little faith in BMW's commitment to customers. Compared to your problems w/ K1200 motors and the final drive on many bikes, the control issues are not expensive problems. I would think they should be addressed before you are involved in lawsuits after injuries.

Cheapening a wonderful machine like you've cheapened the R1200 RT may be good for your balance sheet, but this will probably be my last BMW.

I'm sure you're aware that Iron Butt magazine now recommends the Honda 1300 ST as their bike of choice instead of a BMW. Does that tell you anything?

Yours,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

August 8, 2012

Chassis #ZW20916

BMW Turn signal / LH control problem

BMW has created a problem for riders with medium and small hands reaching the turn signal if the communication system is installed. It's especially noticeable w/ the LH signal. Given the fact that BMW riders are often involved in long distance touring, we face traffic regularly. If we can't signal the intent to turn or change lanes, we're asking to be involved in an accident. Many times I've thought the LH signal was engaged when it was not. With 4000 miles on this machine, the learning curve should be over. BMW Charlotte even installed another switch trying to solve the problem. It didn't help, but I certainly appreciate their extra effort.

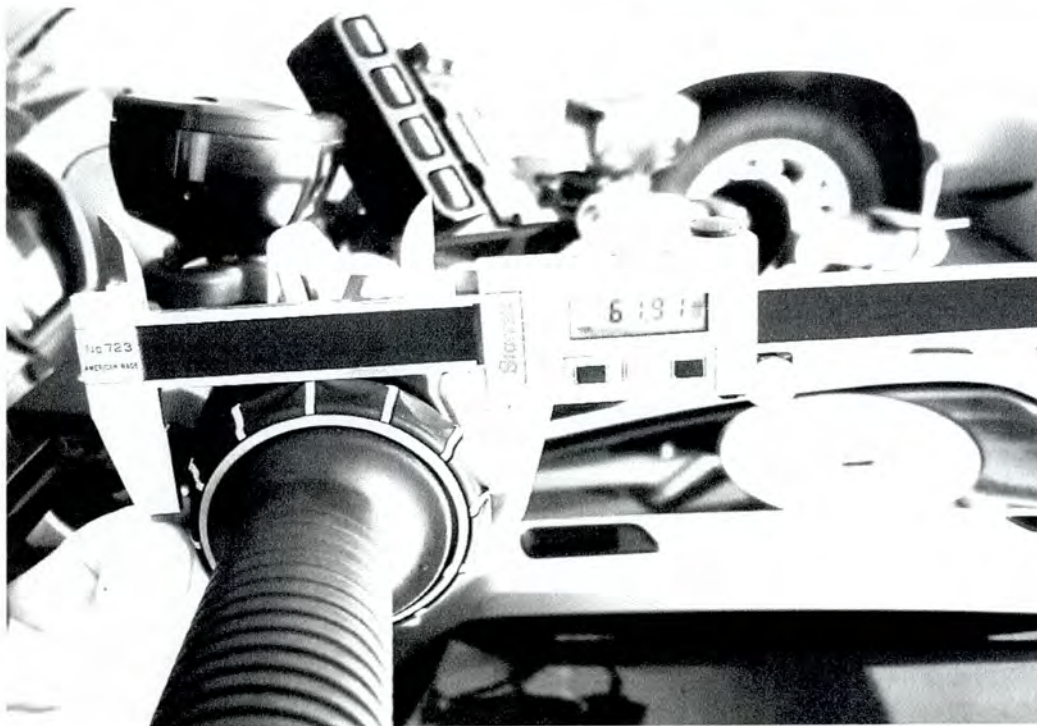
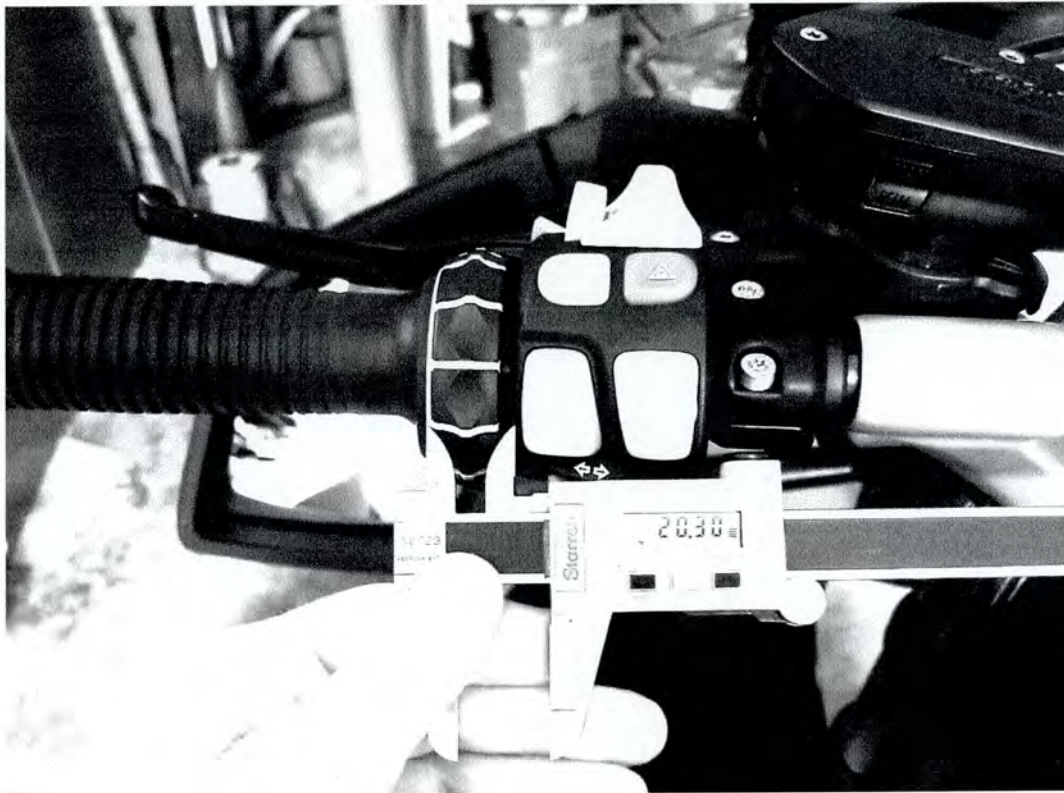
The problem comes from the oversized multi controller. It takes up too much room and puts the turn signal control out of consistent reach. This newer 3 way switch is a very poor substitute for the individual LH / RH / Kill switches as used on my 2007 R 1200 RT. The old system worked Every Time. The new system works ONLY when proper thumb pressure is applied. There are too many times I thought the signal was on, only to discover it wasn't.

I've changed my grip to try to accommodate BMW's turn signal, but leather gloves and the turn signal surface don't always create a good purchase. The LH turn signal needs to be PULLED towards the hand to engage.

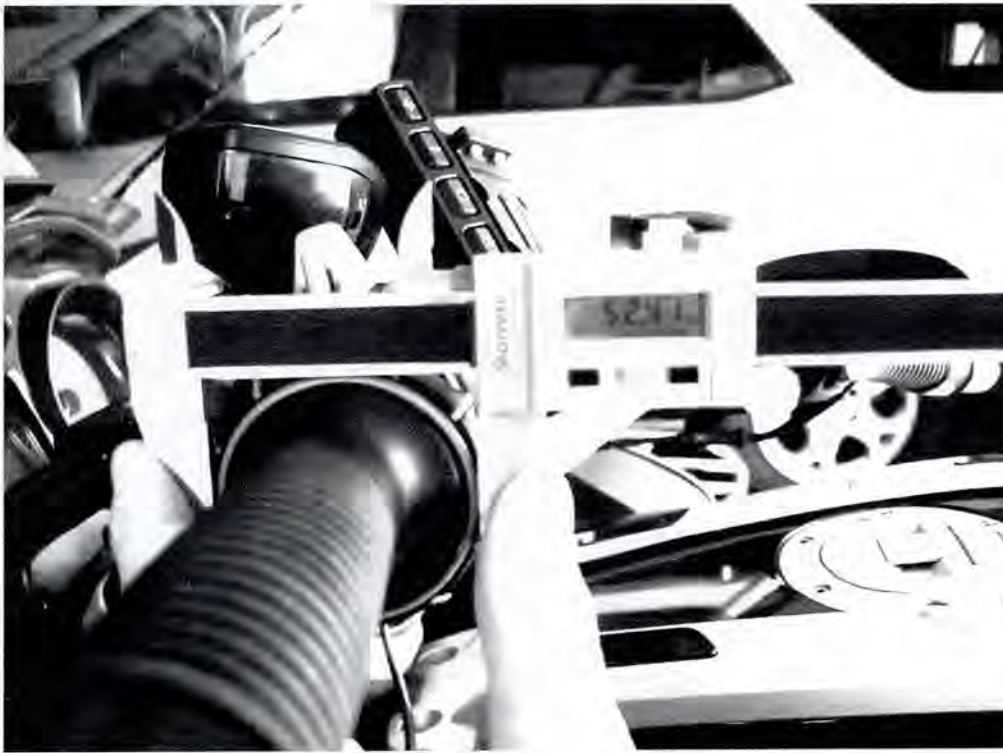
This grip also creates more strain on the thumb as the thumb is extended. The old system didn't require a special grip position.



Note the 20.3 mm width the multi controller requires. This width should be reduced by at least 50% so the thumb can easily reach the turn signal.



Note the 61.9 mm Major (large) Diameter with the finger grooves. If this was reduced to the Minor diameter of 52.4 mm the thumb would have less interference to the turn signal.



Your communication system may be useful. Personally I find it extremely difficult to work with. On the rare occasion the radio is on, when I use the turn signal the radio channel often changes. If you check BMW Sport Touring Camhead forum you'll find many comments regarding the communication system.

Solutions:

- a. Change multi controller size. This should be retrofitted to ALL BMW motorcycles if the owner wishes.
Suggestion: 8-10 mm W x 52 mm OD w/ NO finger grooves.
- b. Remove the entire communication system and multi controller. Give owners a credit for the amount of this system that can be used in the BMW dealership.
- c. Offer a cash refund and remove the communication system and multi controller.
- d. Redesign and retrofit a completely new communication control system in existing machines.

The 2012 BMW R 1200 RT is a great motorcycle. Your communication system control has created a dangerous condition for riders with medium to small hands. Perhaps your engineer has hands the size of a pro basketball player and this doesn't bother him. My size 9.5 hands have a problem reaching the turn signal consistently. This is dangerous.

I look forward to your response and will volunteer my R 1200 RT to be retrofitted with a properly sized radio control.

Yours,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

October 4, 2012

To: BMW Motorrad

From: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Charlotte, NC [REDACTED]

RE: Chassis #ZW20916

BMW Multi Controller Problem

Dear BMW:

This is my 3rd letter regarding this problem with your oversized Multicontroller. This device inhibits access to turn signals for those with medium to small hands. Using the Aerostich sizing as a barometer, my hand size is 9.5, or a medium hand.

Today my 2012 R 1200 RT, purchased 6/23/12 has 9850 miles. I am as used to the turn signal function / malfunctions as I will ever be. Even though my hand position has changed to accommodate your horrible design and turn signal, the LH turn signal is actually turned on about 60% of the time. It's simply too far away from the thumb to be accessed easily. My Harley has much better turn signal control than the BMW.

I will attach a previous communication for your engineering department. They need to make a retro fit before someone is killed.

Recently my Left Thumb joint has swollen and is very sore. The right thumb is fine, but the joint on the left has swollen. My chiropractor told me the bursa sac is trying to protect a damaged joint. The reason for the damage: the multi controller forces the thumb to a highly stretched position to engage the turn signal.

I WANT THE MULTICONTROLLER REMOVED OR REPLACED WITH A PROPERLY SIZED COVER. This should be a BMW expense.

My next letter will go to the National Transportation and Safety Board. Perhaps they can force a solution to your design.

Don't bother having customer service call again. I want to talk to Designers, Product Development or an Engineer who can actually DO SOMETHING. The R 1200 RT is a great motorcycle, but this is a problem that should be addressed. I simply can't be the only rider w/ this problem. I want this problem resolved.

[REDACTED]

January 29, 2013

[REDACTED]
Charlotte, NC [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] email:

Mr. Hans Blesse
BMW Motorrad USA
300 Chestnut Ridge Road
Woodcliff Lake, NJ 07677-7731

RE: Chassis #ZW20916

BMW Multi Controller Problem

Dear Mr. Blesse:

This is my fourth letter or email regarding the danger your multi controller creates for riders trying to engage turn signals. Since purchasing a 2012 BMW R1200RT on June 23, 2012 the bike now has 14800 miles. While attending several BMW motorcycle rallies one conversation with other riders revolves around the difficulty engaging turn signals on bikes w/ the multicontroller. While I have a medium size 9.5 hand, even riders with large hands find it difficult to consistently engage the turn signal.

For your review, the multi controller has two major design faults that make turn signal engagement very difficult:

1. Major (outside) diameter is too big.
2. Width is too wide.

This is dangerous. I simply cannot tell you how many times I tried to engage the left turn signal to change lanes and discovered the turn signal wasn't engaged. This is going to kill or injure riders.

This needs to be recalled and fixed. You've created a danger not only to BMW riders and passengers, but to motorists driving cars. Turn signals provide information to other riders/motorists and the multicontroller design does not allow this to happen.

Since I've had no response other than customer service phone calls from BMW, this is being copied to the National Transportation Safety Board. While I dislike government intervention when a responsible company can fix a problem, BMW does not appear interested in rider safety.

My previous, more detailed letter is included.
To the right is hand position for turn signal engagement. Note thumb does not grip signal enough to engage.

Yours,

[REDACTED]
**Cc: National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594**



[REDACTED]
Charlotte, NC [REDACTED]

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RECEIVED
AT NTB 11/11/13

HS

**National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594**

