



Brake Director

by Rob Earick, PCI #363

Puyallup (WA) Police Department

In case you haven't heard of the Brake Director, below are excerpts from their website to provide you with information about the product.

The Brake Director™ is a one-hand power braking system for bicycles. This little component multiplies brake lever force and synchronizes brakes to bring you to a safe and secure stop. Brake Director™ allows you to do with one hand what's normally only possible with two hands: apply the brakes to both wheels on a bicycle. We call Brake Director™ the world's first one-hand power braking system, and the "power" part reflects the fact that Brake Director™ literally multiplies the force applied to your brakes when you squeeze the lever. This makes it possible for you to brake both wheels by applying the same amount of force to the brake lever that you would normally use to brake just one wheel.

I had the opportunity to test the Brake Director for approximately four months. I tested it in a controlled environment (training) as well as in real life police applications on the street. I outfitted one Trek Police package bike and one Giant Iguana bike with disc brakes with the Brake Director, and I also had the most experienced and skilled police cyclist on our department, Officer Dave Temple, use the product while working the streets to get his opinion.

The Brake Director was originally developed to assist persons with upper body disabilities. The inventor approached IPMBA with the idea that the Brake Director could be a tool to assist the police cyclist. The system would allow the police cyclist to free up a hand to grab a suspect or draw a firearm without worrying about braking.

When we were first given the opportunity to ride a bike equipped with the Brake Director, we were impressed with the simplicity and ease of use. We tested the product using the "Maximum Braking" technique, and the bike quickly slowed to a stop while maintaining controllability.

I will begin by saying that the Brake Director is very effective in stopping the bike. So much so, it almost dumped me a couple of times when I tried to use it during slow speed maneuvers such as cone courses. If you are accustomed to "dragging" the rear brake during slow speed maneuvers, you must remember that the front brake will also be applied. I found this reduced my ability to control the front wheel. At first it felt similar to riding in loose sand, but after practice, I found it to be manageable.

I tested the product on all aspects of training, from stairs to dismounts. After 10+ years as a Police Cyclist Instructor, it has become second nature for me to perform these maneuvers. However, when utilizing the Brake Director, I found myself "learning" to perform these functions. The product worked in all applications, but it took some "training" and familiarization to become accustomed to and comfortable using it.

Ofc. Temple used the product for a couple of days and found it to be too cumbersome for him. He explained that he had a difficult time doing the slow speed maneuvers because the front brake would activate when he tried to drag the rear brake. Ofc. Temple is assigned to patrol parks and community events where he has to ride through crowds of people. He was not able to get comfortable using the product and traded bikes to go back to the conventional braking system.

To get another opinion on the Brake Director, I allowed Corrections Officer Jeff Dreyer to test the product. Ofc. Dreyer is a recreational cyclist who also commutes to work on a bike. He sent me the following email regarding his experience: "I found the braking system very good. I went on dry grass,



wet grass, down hills and up hills and the only issue I had was that you did stop very fast. Officers should take time to get used to the braking system because I stopped a lot more quickly with the new system verses the old. I almost dumped it a couple times because I didn't have my foot out of the toe clips fast enough, but everything was fine once I got used to it." Ofc. Dreyer's experience was from more of a recreational standpoint than a duty one, but it shows that it is possible to become comfortable with the product.

I will end by saying that the product is very effective at what it is designed to do. The system appears to be of high quality and well-designed. It is a remarkable product for its original use, assisting those with disabilities to be able to ride safely. As far as police tactics, the Brake Director does free up the rider's hand for other tasks. IPMBA does not train to shoot from a moving bike. Even though you can maintain control of the bike with one-handed braking using the Brake Director, riding a bicycle is not a safe and stable shooting platform and shooting from a moving bike is still strongly discouraged.

The idea that the free hand may be used to grab a fleeing suspect is just that, an idea. The suspect must be on the side with the free hand and then you still have the concern of controlling the bike and the suspect. It is recommended that you stay with the approved tactics of IPMBA. The free hand may be handy to talk on the radio while pursuing a suspect or responding to a call.

I believe that with training and practice, the Brake Director can be a tool in the Police Cyclist's bag. However, it will probably be easier to train a new Police Cyclist to use the Brake Director than a veteran Police Cyclist to switch over.

Brake Director participates in IPMBA's Product Purchase Program. For more information, visit www.brakedirector.com.

Rob Earick has been a Police Officer with the City of Puyallup for 14+ years and a Police Cyclist for 12 years. He has been an IPMBA Instructor with IPMBA since 1998 and has also participated in numerous charity bike rides. He can be reached at robe@ci.puyallup.wa.us.

©2008 IPMBA. This review appeared in the Fall 2008 issue of *IPMBA News*.