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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Snell Memorial Foundation

This is the thirtieth of the Foundation's quarterly newsletters to the helmet manufacturing industry. The twenty-ninth was sent out last August. Comments and items for inclusion in subsequent issues are invited.

In This Issue

1. [Manufacturers' Meeting](#)
2. [DOT Revision](#)
3. [RS-98 Ski Helmet Brochure](#)
4. [TRL Standard & Super Helmet](#)
5. [FIA & FIM Helmet Meetings](#)
6. [FIM Helmet Concerns](#)
7. [Flip-Up Motorcycle Helmets](#)
8. [SMSA Meeting](#)
9. [Helmet Designations](#)
10. [Who to Contact at Snell](#)

Manufacturers' Meeting

There will be a manufacturers meeting this February in conjunction with the annual PowerSports Expo in Indianapolis, Indiana. The agenda is likely to include a discussion of the long awaited revision of FMVSS 218, the DOT Motorcycle Helmet Standard as well as current activity at FIM and FIA regarding headgear. Please contact this office with suggestions for additional agenda items.

All Snell certified manufacturers are welcome to participate but no one should feel obligated. The sense of the discussions will be reported in following issues of "Heads Up".



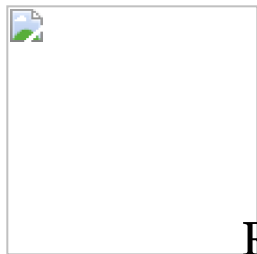
DOT Revision

The revision to the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 218 appears to be stalled. An announcement had seemed imminent since late 1998 but no one now seems willing or able to make any projections.

The DOT Motorcycle Helmet Standard is a mandatory minimum for headgear sold for motorcycle use throughout the United States. It is specified in most U.S. jurisdictions where motorcycle helmet use is required. Recently, Canada also requires that motorcyclists wear either DOT or Snell certified motorcycle helmets.

It has been twenty-eight years since FMVSS 218 was first put into effect, plenty of time to discover its shortcomings and consider improvements. The directors and staff here at the Foundation are ready with suggestions and, it's a certainty, so are a lot of others.

Along with riders and traffic authorities throughout North America, and manufacturers and technical and medical experts throughout the world, we await the first draft of the new, improved FMVSS 218. It will be the opening gun in what should be a lively series of rounds of public comment and re-drafts. Let's hope that every aspect of the standard and its administration will be up for discussion and that it will be soon.



RS-98 Ski Helmet Brochure

The Snell Safety Education Center has prepared a new four color, four page brochure discussing the importance of appropriate crash helmets for recreational skiing and snowboarding. This item explains, in a few sets of bullets and simple diagrams, the function and benefits of wintersports crash helmets and the operation of the Snell RS-98 Certification program. It is intended for use in winter sports safety training as well as a point of sales promotional item to persuade winter sports enthusiasts of the value of headgear when they are most receptive; that is, when they are actually shopping for ski and snowboard clothing and equipment.

Copies of the brochure may be ordered on-line through the Foundation's web site. There is no charge but your tax deductible donations to the Snell Safety Education Center will help us continue this effort and will be gratefully received.

The Center will also distribute copies of the new brochure from the Foundation's booth at the February SIA Show in Las Vegas. Hong Zhang and Gib Brown will be on hand to discuss Snell's role in wintersports safety and to get valuable feedback from industry professionals. Manufacturers, retailers, distributors and other interested parties are invited to stop by for a visit.

TRL Standard & Super Helmet

Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), an English organization has been working under contract to the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), the foremost international automobile racing authority. This result is a new auto racing helmet standard which appears to be more demanding than any currently in effect. TRL coupled their standards development effort to a helmet development effort. Essentially, they first sought to identify the best helmet possible and then set their standard's helmet performance requirements to match. Thus, their effort led to the development of a new helmet as well as a new standard.

The approach taken by TRL is substantially different than that followed here at the Foundation. Snell has arrived at its current requirements by increments. For each successive standard, the directors review the capabilities of the currently certified headgear and redraw the requirements to favor those headgear that best meet the needs of their wearers. In so doing, the Foundation emphasizes those capabilities the directors consider most important but it is the state of the industry that sets the levels. We neither have nor claim the expertise to set levels for helmet performance directly. Instead, the Foundation relies on a mechanism by which the best in the industry set the levels that all must then meet.

TRL has chosen another, bolder route. Rather than rely on the best in the industry to lead the way to better headgear, they will teach the making of better helmets themselves. A prototype unit of the TRL design was introduced by Mr. Max Mosley of the FIA at a press conference on May 26, 2001 in Monte Carlo, Monaco and created quite a stir. FIA and TRL have made the plans for the new super helmet available to interested manufacturers in hopes that production units will soon become available to the racing community. The transition from concept and design to finished products is always uncertain, however. It may be some time until TRL's conceptual helmet can be realized in a full prototype and, after that, a commercially feasible product.

Should some manufacturer succeed, it is expected that the first units of these new super helmets will be tested to existing standards such as the Foundation's SA2000 requirements. Once manufacturers and standards groups understand the capabilities of the new headgear, we will all be better able to move on to a consideration of the TRL proposals for the new racing helmet standard.



FIA & FIM Helmet Meetings

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FIM Helmet Concerns

The Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme (FIM) will play close attention to developments in racing helmets and standards at FIA and TRL. However, they also are concerned about the complexities imposed by their current rules for helmet use.

FIM has traditionally admitted helmets satisfying any of a broad range of international and local standards. Safety inspectors have to recognize the labels and logos of many different homologations some of which, like our own, require a determined search inside the helmet. They have to contend with aftermarket modifications that might affect a headgear's protective capability. They may also have to contend with outright fraud such as stolen or counterfeit labels. FIM may seek to simplify the safety inspectors' tasks by reducing the number of standards accepted and by asking the standards organizations and manufacturers to adopt measures to control aftermarket modification and prevent fraud. It is expected that the first rule changes will apply to World Championship Events.

Flip-Up Motorcycle Helmets

The Foundation has received a barrage of questions concerning a particular style of motorcycle helmet. This configuration looks like a standard full face helmet but the front of the helmet is hinged to flip-up and away from the wearer's face. Everyone, including our own staff, is impressed with the convenience of a full face helmet that facilitates drinking a cup of coffee, smoking a cigarette and conducting normal conversation all without removing one's hat. The flip-up style is especially convenient for anyone who wears glasses.

So how come none of these flip-up helmets are Snell certified? The short answer is that none of the flip-up helmets are certified because none of their manufacturers has submitted them for testing. The Foundation is ready to accept submissions of flip-up style helmets and will hold them to all the same test requirements set for traditional full face headgear. The chin bar will be tested for rigidity, the face shield must withstand the pellet penetration tests and, of course, the helmet must provide all the impact protection we demand of every full face and open face motorcycle helmet. Drinking coffee and cleaning eyeglasses without removing a helmet is very appealing but the Foundation is not ready to give up any protective capability for the convenience.

How well will these flip-up helmets do in Snell testing? We won't know until we test them. My best guess is that the chin bar rigidity tests and the face shield penetrations tests will not represent any particular problems. Since most of the current flip-up headgear use standard chin straps and buckles and can be removed without lifting the face piece, I do not anticipate any retention test problems either. Impact testing may pose unique difficulties for this flip-up configuration but Snell impact testing poses difficulties for all motorcycle helmet configurations.

The Foundation urges helmet manufacturers to design and build flip-up helmets to meet the M2000 standard and to submit samples for Snell certification. We hope that interested motorcyclists everywhere will contact helmet dealers and distributors with the same encouragement.

SMSA Meeting

Ms Hong Zhang, the Foundation's Director of Education, attended the August, 2001, meeting of the State Motorcycle Safety Administrators in Reno. These are the people who organize and conduct motorcycle ridership courses throughout the United States. Many of the attendees are course instructors. Quite a few of these teach motorcycling for little more reward than the pleasure of sharing a sport they love.

Two of the attendees were gifted with new M2000 motorcycle helmets, a model **Z-II** and a model **VFX-R**, donated by the Shoei Safety Helmet Corporation. We're grateful to the people at Shoei for their generosity.

The value of ridership training is undeniable. New riders seem to get the equivalent of a six months' jump in experience from these courses without some of the attendant hard knocks that often befall neophytes. The jump is worthwhile because the first six months on a motorcycle are usually the riskiest period in a rider's career.

For many, these ridership courses also provide the first and most complete grounding in the selection and use of motorcycle safety accessories including helmets. Since most of the instructors wear their own gear for the field training, their personal choices will make lasting impressions. I doubt that any of the instructors would ever use or recommend gear unless they personally believed in it. But a marketer of good gear would do well to get a few units of his products into the hands of these instructors, whether through discount programs or donations to SMSA. I urge all facets of the industry and Snell certified helmet manufacturers in particular to look into the SMSA and to support the efforts of this fine organization.

Helmet Designations

The Foundation posts lists of current Snell certified headgear as a public service. Unfortunately, these lists are often incomplete. Since many helmet buyers consult these lists before they shop, inaccuracies may lead to lost sales. Many buyers also look up their new headgear after they've brought them home so that missing listings can cause a great deal of anxiety. All manufacturers should please check the listings at the Snell web site, < www.smf.org >, or request a detailed breakout of currently certified model and size designations from the California office. Please advise of all errors and omissions. Since these lists are posted primarily for the convenience of the public, please consider all the various size designations and brand designations as well.

Who to Contact at Snell

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