



Heads Up Issue 16

Date: June 6, 1997
To: All Snell Certified Manufacturers
From: Edward B. Becker, Executive Director

This is the sixteenth of the Foundation's quarterly newsletters to the helmet manufacturing industry. The fifteenth was sent out last March. Comments and items for inclusion in subsequent issues are invited.

Snell Memorial Foundation UK Laboratory Closes

As of June 1, 1997, the Foundation has terminated operations at the Snell UK lab in Farnham, England. This is the latest in a series of cost cutting measures necessary to bring expenses into line with revenues. The Snell UK staff, Brian and Paul Walker are investigating the feasibility of setting up a private, for-profit, testing company. We wish them all good fortune. I hope that they will continue to be able to provide advice and guidance to me and my colleagues in the US, and technical testing services to the European community and beyond.

ISO Guide 25 Accreditation for Snell, CA

As of June 2, 1997, the Snell Memorial Foundation's California laboratory has been awarded American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) approval for helmet testing. A2LA is an internationally recognized authority administering quality laboratory accreditation programs to ISO/IEC Guide 25 "General Requirements for the Competence of Calibration and Testing Laboratories." The scope of the A2LA accreditation includes all of the tests covered in the Foundation's bicycle, motorcycle, auto racing, non-motorized sports and harness racing helmet standards. The accreditation confirms that the Foundation's California laboratory has the capability to perform Snell testing and has the quality control necessary to assure the accuracy and validity of Snell test results.

The Foundation sought this accreditation as part of its continuing commitment to quality. Since its beginning in 1957, the Foundation has urged manufacturers to design and build quality protective helmets and has urged the public to seek out and wear them. As a recognized authority in helmet safety, it is proper that the Foundation submit itself to another recognized authority to demonstrate the quality of its own testing programs and procedures.

The Foundation looks forward to continuing in the A2LA program in order to increase the recognition and value of Snell Certification Programs for both helmet manufacturers and the helmet wearing public.

Consumer Reports Bicycle Helmet Evaluations

The June issue of Consumer Reports included an article on bicycle helmets. The article warned consumers about a widely used plastic buckle component and also awarded a surprisingly low impact protection rating to one helmet currently certified to the Foundation's B-90 Standard.

We reviewed our test records and conducted additional testing immediately. We have concluded that the buckles and the helmet all perform to the Snell requirements and that Snell Certified helmets continue to provide premium levels of head protection. We remain convinced of the accuracy of Snell testing and of the protective capabilities of the fine bicycle helmets we certify.

Anyone who has read the Consumer Reports article and who has concerns over the buckle or the capabilities of any Snell Certified helmet is invited to call our special toll free number, 1-888-763-5599 (1-888-SNELL99). This line comes directly into our offices, I or one of my colleagues will do our best to explain the tests and their significance.

Snell Safety Education Center (SSEC)

As of December, 1996, the Snell Safety Education Center, a California non-profit corporation, has taken up the Snell Memorial Foundation's effort to promote the widespread use of protective headgear. The Center is dedicated to all the ideals of the Foundation: to engage in scientific, educational and charitable activities; to research and develop safety equipment for the prevention of injuries; and to develop and provide information, materials and services to encourage the use of safety equipment. However, the Center is a distinct and autonomous organization. Since there is no connection to the Foundation's testing and certification programs, the Center will be able to work more directly with consumer groups, helmet manufacturers and other charitable organizations.

Ms. Hong Zhang, who organized and directed the Foundation's current helmet education programs, will continue these efforts as president of the Snell Safety Education Center. As with the Foundation, Ms. Zhang expects to work closely with state and community groups dedicated to public safety. Working through the Center, Ms. Zhang hopes to improve and expand the support provided to these vital state and community programs.

S-97 and L-97 Standards

The 1997 Standard for Protective Headgear Used in Skiing and Other Winter Activities (S-97) and the 1997 Standard for Protective Headgear for Use with Low Powered Vehicles, Mopeds and Motorized Bicycles (L-97) are now in their final form. Copies of these two new Standards as well as the Foundation's draft equestrian helmet standard are available from the Foundation's North Highlands Office.

Manufacturers are invited to submit samples for evaluation with respect to S-97, L-97 or the equestrian draft standard. Please contact the North Highlands office for further information.

New Snell Web Site Address

The Snell Foundation Home Pages originated by Dr. Philip Graitcer on the Internet World Wide Web has merged with the Snell World Wide Web site set up by Dr. Frank Lin at the Snell California offices. The Snell Web site address is now <http://www.smf.org>. The site includes information on the Foundation and its certification programs, lists of certified products, links to ftp downloads of Snell Standards and drafts and links to other web sites of interest including Dr. Graitcer's home pages for the WHO Bicycle Helmet Initiative.

Frank welcomes comments and suggestions regarding any aspect of the Web site. We would especially like to establish links with Web sites maintained by manufacturers, distributors and retailers of Snell certified helmets.

Where Did You Get That Helmet?

If you're happy with your Snell Certified helmet or even if you hate it, we want to know all about it: model, size, serial number, date of manufacture, date of purchase, where and when you got it, how much you paid, how's the fit, the comfort, the style... in short, the works.

Our helmet survey is currently under construction. Look for it the next time you access the Snell Web site and tell us all about your hat.

Whom to Contact at Snell

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